MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS

By ADA STERLING

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A DRAMA IN VERSE

IN TWO PERIODS: EIGHT SCENES

BY

ADA STERLING

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To the gifted artist who inspired the writing of the play

JULIA ARTHUR

AUTHOR'S NOTE

It is unlikely that Schiller's *Mary Stuart,* with which, in numerous versions and adaptations, the names of Rachel, Ristori, Janauschek, and Modjeska have been linked, will ever be transcended; this, despite the accusations that have been brought against it by the hypercritical. One of these is that the work is historically inaccurate, notably in the great garden scene. This, however, evokes the question as to what historical play is historically accurate?

In the making of the present work, numerous documents, diaries, plays, and other literary treatments of the story of the unfortunate Mary Stuart have been examined, including the memoirs of James Melvil (covering his service as Secretary to Mary, in France, while she was still Dauphine and, afterward, while she reigned there), and Lord Bacon's guarded summing up of her rival's character in his *In Felicem Memoriam Elizabethae.* Their testimony, and that of Brantôme, and others, is that of living witnesses. The result of reading it in the present author's mind has been increasing reverence for the accuracy of the German poet's drama.

What constitutes the great objections to it for theatre purposes today is its outgrown literary and dramatic form, in which great flights of oratory take the places that should be given to rapid dialogue and action; also, that it is an incomplete story. It opens when Mary Stuart, after eighteen years of imprison-

ment, had almost reached the martyrdom she was to undergo in her forty-fifth year. It is hard, however, to conceive of a stronger treatment of her tragedy at that period. Certainly Swinburne, with Schiller before him, fell far behind his predecessor in his drama of the same period, and of the same name. Nowadays, largely because of his old-time fashioning, Schiller's work has fallen among the shadows.

In the play offered herewith, the effort has been to set a comprehensive life story of Scotland's unfortunate Queen within the compass of a modern theatre performance; and, the conviction being strong that Schiller's treatment of the Stuart's final tragedy represents the apex of attainment, the author has dared, not merely frankly and freely, but in homage as well, to base the second period of this play upon the skeleton of that work, re-forming the elements of the debated garden scene, while retaining, it is hoped, the vitality of this and other spots. This will increase or lessen the estimate placed upon this play, according to the point from which it is viewed. The effort has been to conserve, not to supersede, absorb, or to destroy; also, to round into a single drama the many-sided story of one of the most pathetic figures in kingly history, including the culminating injustice to Mary, Queen of Scots, which time has fixed, ineradicably, among the great judicial crimes of the ages.

A. S.

FIRST PERIOD

CASTE

In the order of their appearance

Cardinal Lorraine
Melvil
Duc de Guise
Mary Stuart
Mary Seton
Catherine de Medici
Throckmorton
Rizzio
Darnley
Ruthven
Douglas
Lindsay
George Douglas
Little Douglas
Jane Kennedy
Sir Amyas Pawlet
Sir Edward Mortimer
Lord Burleigh
Queen Elizabeth
Earl of Leicester
Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury
A Guard
Elspeth Curle
Burgoyne

Extra Women, Courtiers, Guards *ad lib.*

The action of the play begins
in 1560 and ends in 1587

EPISODE ONE

SCENE:—*A salon in the Château St. Germain. Door L. Lower and upper doors R. Rear, a wide-open door, through which the gardens are seen, all sunlit, and, beyond, above a line of trees, and seen in the distance, the bell-tower of St. Denis. A verandah, on level with salon, and outlined by balustrade, leads from salon to garden. The furnishings of the salon are simple, yet royal.*

DISCOVERED:—*An empty scene, flooded with sunshine.*

AT RISE:—*Enter, on verandah, up Scene,* CARDINAL LORRAINE, *a tall, lean, typical Guise; brilliant eyes, lowered, now, in deep thought. He stops in doorway C., turns, as if to go on, reconsiders, and enters salon. Again shows indecision, listens. Then he crosses to door L., opens it, listens. He hesitates again; then resolves his problem, returns to door R.U.E., and calls:*

LORRAINE Paris!

[Enter a Servingman in livery]

Ask Monsieur Melvil to come here!

[The Servingman bows and exits. LORRAINE *walks about, pondering tensely.*

Enter, from R.U.E., MELVIL. *He is twenty-three, at most. A very buoyant personality, in the neat dress of a not rich nobleman.*

MELVIL Your Grace desires to see me?

LORRAINE Yes, Monsieur!

[*Looks observantly at* MELVIL, *then speaks somewhat at random*]

I see my Niece's ladies in the park.
Why is their mistress not with them?

MELVIL Your Grace,
Her Majesty returned in tears from her
Last visit to King François' tomb.

LORRAINE I'll go
To her.

MELVIL Her Majesty, your Grace, is in
The Royal Chapel!

LORRAINE Grieving still! I fear
Her leaving France will break her heart!

MELVIL She came
Back from St. Denis more composed than usual;
But, coming on one of the Regent's suite
Who, in the courtyard, was misusing sorely
A handsome palfrey, much incensed, my mistress
Rebuked him roundly; whereupon—

[*He stops, hesitating.*

LORRAINE What then?

MELVIL [*Glances cautiously towards door down L. Lowers his voice*]
A lady of the Regent's train came from
Queen Catherine's pavilion—

LORRAINE Ah, I hope
No angry words were passed?

MELVIL A few, your Grace;
But with them passed my mistress's resentment.
She would have made amends for her hot speech,
But that the Regent's lady curtly turned
Again, to the pavilion.

[LORRAINE *makes a gesture of indignation*]

Then, my mistress,
Much spent with her emotions of the day,
Dismissed her ladies, and sought reinforcement
In prayer.

[LORRAINE *walks about, his perplexity deepening.*

LORRAINE The Regent leaves the Château—when?

MELVIL Within the hour, your Grace. Her retinue's
Already gathering in the courtyard.

LORRAINE She
Has sent no answer to my message that
The Cardinal Lorraine would see her, ere
She goes?

MELVIL No, none, your Grace.

LORRAINE Who of her suite
Is in your confidence?

MELVIL No one, your Grace.

LORRAINE You came to us commended by my sister—

MELVIL Yes! Madame Guise was benefactor to me,
And to my brothers.

LORRAINE That alone, Monsieur,
Should weigh with you to inspire fidelity.

MELVIL Your Grace—!

LORRAINE [*Moderating his severity, slightly*]
Come, Melvil! You are young, and I
Can make allowance for your youth. Who of
The Regent's suite is in your confidence?
Be frank! If 'tis some matter of the heart—

[*Enter, with paper in hand, from L., the* DUC DE GUISE. *Stands silently, listening.*

MELVIL I do assure you, there is none, your Grace,

In all the Regent's Court—in petticoats
Or breeches—I'd place faith in. No, not one!

LORRAINE [*Takes paper, which* GUISE *hands to him, glances at it*]
You have some correspondence, I believe,
With England's Embassy?

MELVIL [*Taken back*]
Why, none, your Grace,
Save that which I, as Secretary to
My Royal Mistress, am obliged to have.

LORRAINE I must exact, Monsieur, completest candor!

MELVIL [*Slightly choleric*]
And I beseech your Grace, deal openly
With me.

LORRAINE I will; as in the past, my brother,
The duc de Guise, and I have ever dealt
With you. Have we not, both, been kind?

MELVIL Your Grace—
Since I came here to serve her Majesty,
You've covered me with kindnesses.

LORRAINE We have
Done more—we have entrusted you with secrets
Pertaining to the welfare of our Niece.

MELVIL Your Grace—

LORRAINE You know the jealousy that leads
The Medici to wish our Niece away
From France; that of Elizabeth, who fears
Lest Marie's presence in England, even in passing
En route for Scotland, may inflame the people
To hail her, as she is, their rightful Queen.
[MELVIL *would stop him, but he hurries on*]
This fear that gnaws Elizabeth's mean heart
Has led her to refuse safe-conduct to

Our Niece, save on conditions, which forever,
Thereafter, would exclude her from the throne
Of England, which Elizabeth now holds,
Unlawfully.—You know how she, to weaken
Our Niece's hands, has, in her absence from
Her kingdom, Scotland, interfered there. She's
Industrious in intrigue and dissembling;
Connives, too, with contentious Scottish Lords
Against my Niece's sovereignty.

UISE Ay! Seeing
Her, by King François' death, replaced by Catherine
Upon the throne of France, Elizabeth
Would take advantage of your young Queen's plight
To force her to renounce the throne of England
On penalty of barring her from Scotland,
Which she, then, by some trick would annex to England.

ORRAINE You know all this, Monsieur, and why our Niece
Must circumvent her, by at once departing
For Scotland.

[*Stops* MELVIL, *again*]

You, the duc de Guise, and I
Have had the guarding of the knowledge of
Our plans for her embarkment, on which hangs,
It may be, even the life of your young Queen—

ELVIL Your Grace, I do entreat you—

ORRAINE Wait, Monsieur—
This paper now confirms what has been too
Apparent for some days, that one of us—
It may be by some trifling indiscretion—
But one of us who're in the important secret
Has failed to guard it. We must ascertain,
Before we can undo the ill effects,

What has been done, and who has done it. You
Despatched some hours ago a document
Addressed to the Ambassador of England—

MELVIL I have the copy of it here!
[*Hands document to* LORRAINE]
As you
Will see, it is a transcript of the letter
Your Grace dictated, and in which the Queen
Refuses, finally, to sign the Treaty
Of Edinburgh, on the ground that it
Involves the sacrifice of Scottish rights.

LORRAINE [*Having scanned paper, hands it to* GUISE]
You've been in conversation with the Regent,
Who, though in public she displays somewhat
Of softness to your Queen, is, in reality,
Her enemy. I would not trust her in
This vexing controversy 'twixt our Niece
And England.

GUISE [*Hands paper to* LORRAINE, *who returns it to* MELVIL]
No, nor I. Ah, how she hated
To see a girl—a Guise—so supersede her!
Her sorrow at her son's untimely death
Was swallowed in her joy, that she, in turn,
Might take the crown from Marie Stuart.

LORRAINE [*Listens, eyes on door down R., walks towards it. Speaks insincerely, loudly*]
Ah,
Our Niece was widowed by the will of God.
[*Opens door, suddenly, looks out. Closes it again.*

GUISE [*Up Scene, walking about. Bitterly*]
Or by slow poison, which the Medicis

So well know how to brew and to administer
To those who bar their way to power!

LORRAINE Be guarded!

MELVIL I pray you, give me leave to speak! I have
Had converse with the Regent, who, upon
Three several occasions, has warm urged me
To stay in France—

GUISE So?

LORRAINE In her service, Melvil?

MELVIL Even so, your Grace.

GUISE Your answer?

MELVIL I could make
But one: 'Twas Madame Guise sent me from Scotland
To serve your Niece, the Dauphine, then, of France—
[*Almost in tears*]
And serve her Majesty I will, your Grace,
So long as I have life! I said so, straight,
To the Queen Regent, as I tell it now.

LORRAINE Thanks, Melvil! That relieves my heart.

GUISE And mine!

MELVIL I do
Assure your Graces—both—your confidence
Restored, much eases mine.

LORRAINE Still, we must probe
This matter. Tell me—You've been careful not
To name the port from which the galleys sail?

MELVIL So careful that I have misnamed it, strongly.
In talking with a member of the staff
Of the Ambassador from England, I
Laid stress upon the preference the Queen

Expressed, continually, to stay in France;
But, if she sails, to leave by way of Havre.

LORRAINE Ah? Excellent!—if he to whom you spoke
Believed it, which I doubt.

GUISE The policy
Of Lord Throckmorton would be quick to point
His nose to Calais, if you spoke of Havre!

[*Up Scene, beyond the railing of loggia,* MARY'S *ladies, accompanied by courtiers, one with a lute, stroll from L. to R., laughing, coquetting.*

MELVIL Your Grace, I sent out to the Port of Havre
Some false despatches to give colour of truth
To other news which I have set afloat;
To wit: My Royal Mistress is resolved
To sail a month hence.

LORRAINE Now we have the secret!
Go, Melvil, and recall to Madame Medici
We wait her pleasure.

[*To* GUISE]

She is ill-disposed
To recognize the Princes of the Church
As having right to summon her to audience!

[GUISE *shrugs his shoulders. To* MELVIL]

Remind your Mistress that the hour is here
For Madame Medici's departure.

MELVIL Yes,
Your Grace.

[*Turns to go.* LORRAINE *recalls him.*

LORRAINE And set a watch upon the highroad,
And bring us word at once of the approach
Of Lord Throckmorton's suite.

MELVIL My Lord is coming
Here? Will his Queen relent and send safe-conduct?

LORRAINE That's to be hoped for; yet not likely. Go!
[MELVIL *turns up C.*]
But to the Regent, first.
[MELVIL *turns, exits down R. To* GUISE, *who walks about*]
Our zealous Melvil
In placing thus the date so far away,
And with particularity, has roused
Suspicion of our actual plan to put
To sea, at once.

GUISE We must effect that end
Before a larger fleet is gathered, that
May oppose the Royal galleys' sailing. From
The information now at hand, my Lord
Concludes we have been lying as to Havre.
Now, if we change our story, he'll suspect
That we again are lying as to Calais.
He will, at least, spread out the fleet now lurking
About that port—if what the fishermen
There say is true.

MELVIL [*Re-enters from down R.*]
The Regent sends her compliments;
Also this word: Her Majesty will walk
Soon in the Park, where, if your Grace will follow,
She'll talk with you.

LORRAINE The upstart! To the last
She would humiliate the house of Guise!
[*Laughter heard, off Scene, up R., of ladies and courtiers*]
Go, Melvil! Set about informing all
Who'll make the journey with our Niece, and those

Especially who travel but to Calais,
That they no more make mystery of route
Or destination. Let them talk of both
Quite freely; and with much pretended secrecy
Do you despatch a courier to Havre
To announce the Queen's departure at that Port.

MELVIL At once, your Grace.

GUISE And let your "secrecy"
Be so obtrusive as to force itself
Upon the attention of the curious.

MELVIL I will, your Grace! Trust me!

[*Laughing, exits L. Sounds of mirth and music up Scene off R. increase.* GUISE *looks off.*

GUISE Our Niece's ladies!

SETON [*Heard outside, R. Calling*]
Her Majesty at last!

VOICES [*In chorus, calling eagerly*]
Your Majesty!

GUISE Our Niece is coming.

[*Enter, on loggia, from L.,* MARY, *carrying her Book of Hours. Enter from R. an eager throng of women and courtiers, hurrying to meet her.*

VOICES Oh, your Majesty!

MARY [*To* SETON, *who would take her book; waving all back*]
No, no! Go back!—Go, all of you! Enjoy
The hours of sunshine that remain, and those
Blue skies! I would not have you lose a cloud—
A single, changing cloud that floats off yonder!
Each memory you take away with you
Will, by and by, gleam golden, in grey Scotland.

Go! Roam among the flowers! Go! laugh, and sing—
You, Fleming, cull me some of those late roses;
And, Brantôme, play a *chanson* on your lute—
Go—all of you! Drink in deep breaths of those
Green woods!—

[*Group moves away, R., reluctantly.* BRANTÔME *strumming on his lute.* MARY *looks after them, wistfully*]

Ah, France! My country! Can it be
That I must leave you? Oh, how can I—

LORRAINE Marie!

GUISE Come, Marie!

MARY [*Turns, weeping on* LORRAINE'S *breast*]
Uncle! Uncle!

LORRAINE [*Soothes her. Faint, plaintive lute music, distant*]
So, the last
Hard parting has been made from François?

MARY Must
It really be the last?

LORRAINE Come, come! The time
Is past for weeping.

GUISE You, who are a Guise—
And Stuart—

LORRAINE Your salt tears add sweetness to
The triumph of the Medici; besides,
Henceforth, your watchword must be: "Forward"!

MARY "Forward"?
Can I cry forward, when fate sends me back
To Scotland—

LORRAINE Tut, tut—

MARY Land of barren moors,
Of gloomy, silent lakes 'mong rugged mountains—

And then—the rugged people! Kilted courtiers—
Bagpipes, instead of lutes and harpsichords,
And porridge in the place of pretty pastry!
I dread the journey worse than death!

GUISE Come, Marie!

MARY You say that, Uncle, who have never been there!
Why! I recall those rough and angry seas
I crossed to come to France, my mother's country,
With gratitude! As they were gates let down
Between me and the gloomiest of childhoods!
Ah, when I think of that bare monastery
Set on a lonely island, where I was
Immured for years—the only love I knew
Came from the hearts of my four Marys, yonder,
Now laughing happily as maidens should;
Then, helpless children, 'prisoned there with me
To while away my tedium! Why, dear Uncles,
Until I came to France I never knew
What love—or freedom—no, nor sunshine meant!
As I look back at it, it seems as if
All life in Scotland were a cold bleak prison!

LORRAINE For you it was a prison, child! Your mother
Had need to guard you closely, against Henry,
Who feared, as does Elizabeth, his daughter,
Your claim upon the English crown; and sought,
When other plots fell down, to effect his purpose
By marriage 'twixt you and his sickly son.

MARY I recollect that, clearly. I was five
When the Ambassador came in to view
The Royal wares he was employed to buy!
He wished to prove me sound, and whole; for some,
It seemed, had spread report that I was humped
And crooked as the English Richard!

GUISE Ah,
The *canaille!*

MARY So, my mother stripped me, held me
All squirming and protesting lustily.
I, somehow, did not take to English phizzes!

GUISE [*Joins in her laughter*]
Ah, thanks to Mary Guise, he failed in all
His plots!

LORRAINE As, thanks to Mary Stuart, her daughter,
His spawn, Elizabeth, will fail in hers!

MARY Yes—but I want no needless struggles! I'll
Not press my claims, unless Elizabeth
Obliges it; but she, they say, has made
A vow she will not wed. Be that as may be,
Until we know each other, she mistrusts me!—
Once I am safe in Scotland, I shall seek
Some cousinly arrangement with her—that
If she'll proclaim me heir, we'll set these differences
At rest.—Be sure I shall be diplomatic!

LORRAINE You think you can be so? Ah, Marie, if
You'd be a diplomat, you must first learn
To hold your impulses in rein.

MARY Why, Uncle—

LORRAINE But, I'll admit, you've ever had a wise
Head on young shoulders! You, who ruled so proudly
In France, have borne humiliation from
The Regent, since—with tact and gentleness.
But, come! She leaves St. Germain in the hour;
Whereafter, we must leave for Calais.

MARY Oh,
Not yet! It is too soon!

GUISE
If we delay
'Twill be too late. Affairs in Scotland are
Too serious.

MARY
Uncle! What a fate to be
A Queen! My crown's a magnet, as it seems,
To draw about me malice—treachery,
And rouse cupidity 'mong those who envy!
I'd rather be the Queen of Poetry
Among the flowers of France—

LORRAINE
You have no choice!
You are the Queen of Scotland, and allied
With every throne in Europe—

MARY
But I'm going
Away from you!

LORRAINE
Tut, tut, my child, there's naught
To harm you! Scotland is not far from France
When seas are free. By letter, or commission,
By every sail that flutters from our port
You shall have word—

[*Enter,* MELVIL, *from L.*

MELVIL
Your Grace—your Majesty—
A courier, preceding the Ambassador,
Has just arrived with these despatches.

[*Hands despatches to* LORRAINE, *who reads addresses.*

LORRAINE
Ah—?
"Her Majesty, the Queen of Scotland!"—for
The Regent—

[*Gives despatch to* MELVIL, *who exits down L. with it.*

MARY
[*Reads her despatch, hands it to others, to read*]
He requests an audience with me—

But he says nothing of safe-conduct! Oh,
Elizabeth will never let me go
To Scotland till I sign the Treaty.

GUISE
Never!
Let nothing ever tempt you, Marie, to it!

MARY
[*Dubious, as* LORRAINE *studies despatch*]
But was not Henry, father of my François,
A party to the making of it?

GUISE
Yes!

MARY
He always loved me, truly. Would he draw
A treaty that could harm me?

LORRAINE
Far from it!
He meant to enlarge your rights, not to curtail them!
He builded on poor François' life—alas!
Now, all's reversed; his death dissolves the Treaty.

GUISE
What's more, you could not sign a paper that
Involves the rights of Scotland, without conference
In person with your Parliament.

MARY
But how
Am I to have it, if Elizabeth
Refuses a safe-conduct?

LORRAINE
You must show
Yourself superior to lawless threats!
I tell you her demand is subterfuge
To hide a base cupidity!

MARY
Ah, well—

GUISE
It is absurd to ask your signature
To papers drawn when you were Queen of France,
Of which you are no longer part, or subject!

MARY
Ah, Uncle! That's the saddest thought of all!
I am a part of France—France part of me
Who am descended from a hundred Kings
Who ruled here—

[*Almost imperceptibly, door down R. opens, as Scene proceeds.*

GUISE Very true; but that's another
Good reason for your going. There is no
Room for you, now, in France, where erstwhile shop-
keepers
Of Florence sit securely in the saddle!

[*The face of* CATHERINE *seen in slightly opened door, down R. Expression of tightening hatred*]

A curse upon the breed of Medicis!

LORRAINE How long, oh Lord, how long?

[*Enter, with royal sweep, from down R.,* CATHERINE, *her face wreathed in smiles, veiling her triumph, and sarcasm. She looks not at all at* GUISE *and* LORRAINE, *but goes to* MARY, *who rises from settle, to greet her.*

CATHERINE Ma chère—

LORRAINE Your Majesty—

[*Bows, draws up Scene.* GUISE, *the same after speech.*

GUISE Your Majesty—

CATHERINE [*To* MARY. *Her hypocrisy apparent under smiles*]
In tears again, ma chère?

MARY It is at sight of you, your Majesty,
My François' mother!

CATHERINE Ah, these earthly partings
Are sad! I, too, must leave you, very shortly.

MARY Oh, I'm heartbroken!

CATHERINE [*Sits on settle, with* MARY]
How I wish I might

Go some leagues farther with you. But, you know
Affairs most urgent call me back to Court.
I must revive the pageant in which you,
Ma chère, so dazzled everyone!

MARY Alas,
Your Majesty, I have forgotten pageants!
I have forgotten everything, of late.
Forgive my tears! It is no pleasant prospect
To leave the land I love and go to face
The strangers who, though they're my subjects, seem,
From all I hear of them, like enemies.

CATHERINE The English Queen is of your kindred—

MARY [*Up Scene* LORRAINE *and* GUISE *show anger*]
Yes—

CATHERINE You know how I regard the English, one
And all! I'll never be content until
I've driven every one of them from France!

[*Enter* MELVIL, *L. He bows to the Queens, in turn, then turns up, after speech to* LORRAINE *and* GUISE.

MELVIL Your Majesty—your Majesty! My Lord
Ambassador from England has arrived.

MARY The emissary of my ardent enemy!

CATHERINE [*Laughing*]
Were you a Medici you'd have no enemies.

MARY Ah, how avoid them?

CATHERINE Very simply, Marie!
Destroy them!

MARY Oh, your Majesty!

CATHERINE It is
The one safe way. Dead enemies are harmless.

[*Rises, as* LORRAINE *and* GUISE *come down,* MELVIL *with them. To* MELVIL]

My Lord Throckmorton has requested audience;
But I must take a last look at the Park—

[*To* MARY]

I have in mind a fête that must be planned.
If you, ma chère—

[*Casually, to* LORRAINE]

your Grace—have business with
My Lord, precede me with him. I'll return
Anon.

[*Sweeps up Scene, to C. Exits, turning R.*

LORRAINE [*To* MELVIL]

I'll see my Lord Ambassador—

[*To* MARY]

And you?

MARY Pray see him first. I must compose
Myself, by going apart awhile. I will
Return at once.

[*She exits, R.U.E.* MELVIL *exits L., but returns, ushering in* THROCKMORTON. *He is a self-important, blunt, overbearing Saxon type.*

LORRAINE Monsieur l'Ambassadeur!

GUISE Monsieur l'Ambassadeur—

THROCKMORTON [*To first one, and then the other. Bad French*]

Messieurs, bon jour!
Your Grace—your Grace. It's rumoured in the city
The Queen of Scotland's leaving soon for Havre.

[GUISE *and* LORRAINE *exchange a glance, which he sees.*

LORRAINE An error, Monsieur. She will sail from Calais.

GUISE Will you be seated?

THROCKMORTON [*Sits without thanking him. To* LORRAINE]
So she sails, your Grace?

LORRAINE Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, allow me, first,
As one entitled by my cloth to speak—
What is the purpose of your visit to
St. Germain? Does your Queen, at last, withdraw
Her opposition to our Niece's passage
To Scotland?

THROCKMORTON No, your Grace; nor will she, till
The Treaty, which I've brought again with me,
[*Draws out document. Very voluminous*]
Is signed—in full—by Mary, Queen of Scotland.
I am instructed by our Queen to state it
In plainest language.

LORRAINE Yours could not be plainer,
Monsieur l'Ambassadeur!

GUISE Nor more barbaric.
This ultimatum is an insult! It
Is mere abuse of power!

LORRAINE Her action is
Unprecedented, as between two princes!
To bar the peaceful passage of a Queen
To her own kingdom—

THROCKMORTON It will not be barred
By Queen Elizabeth, if Mary Stuart
Will ratify the Treaty.

GUISE Never!

LORRAINE Never!

GUISE This is the barg'ning of a robber chief
Holding his victim at a ruinous ransom!

THROCKMORTON Our Queen, your Grace of Guise, pretends no taste
For fashion, even of speech—

GUISE They are not wanting
Who say your Queen "pretends" in everything!

LORRAINE [*Restraining* GUISE]
Your Queen would have our Niece resign her rights—
Those she was born to—on the penalty
Of suffering exile?

GUISE Does your Queen want war?
It is but two years since Elizabeth's
Half-sister challenged France, and, for her pains,
Lost Calais!

THROCKMORTON Do you threaten us, your Grace?
In which case France, in turn, may lose that port—
It is of little consequence to us.
Our fleet, however, is not what it was;
And we are not alarmed at talk of war!

[CATHERINE, *smiling, appears on loggia.* LORRAINE, *to* GUISE *and* THROCKMORTON, *interposing.*

LORRAINE Enough, monsieur l'Ambassadeur. Henri—
The Regent is returning.

[*Enter,* CATHERINE, *up C.*]

Madame—

GUISE Madame!

THROCKMORTON [*Presses past the* GUISES, *to* CATHERINE. *Fawning, throughout scene*]
Your Majesty—I'm charmed I come in time.
I understand you leave the Château soon?

CATHERINE [*Continues, throughout, her smiles*]
Today, Monsieur!

THROCKMORTON So soon! But I'm in time
On the behalf of my most gracious Queen
To offer you my homage—

CATHERINE Thanks, Monsieur—

I trust you are the bearer of good news?
Perhaps the long withheld safe-conduct for
The Queen of Scotland?

THROCKMORTON
Majesty—that question,
As I have been explaining to Messieurs,
Still hangs upon the signing of the Treaty.

GUISE
It hangs, my Lord, upon the English Queen's
Intention to wrest from our Niece her rights.

LORRAINE
[*Snaps his finger almost in* THROCKMORTON'S *face*]
As for your Queen's safe-conduct, that for it!

GUISE
My Lord, our Niece leaves France when it shall please her:
And she shall never sign away her rights
To England's crown, her lawful heritage.

THROCKMORTON
[*As* CATHERINE *looks on, amused*]
Your Grace insists she has a claim on it,
But that's a question still to be decided.

GUISE
In England, possibly; but in the minds
Of European Kings and of the Pope,
It has been settled.

THROCKMORTON
Well, your Grace, possession
Decides it. Queen Elizabeth is Queen
By virtue of her father's will. Were one
Acclaimed, as is your Niece, free, now, to pass
Among our people, what seditions might
Arise? Why, on this subject, they're already
Too wide divided!

LORRAINE
Ah, my Lord, that statement
Exposes the true basis of your fears.
[*To* CATHERINE]
Your pardon, Madame—the Ambassador
Would speak with you—

[*Up Scene, with* GUISE, *and apart, on the loggia.*

THROCKMORTON I'm sure your Majesty
Can understand my Queen's dilemma. She
Is much embarrassed by this conflict with
Queen Mary Stuart.

CATHERINE [*Plays with him, though he does not see it*]
Ah, it troubles her?

THROCKMORTON Your Majesty knows well of what the Guises
Are capable.

CATHERINE Oh, pardon! Let us not
Mix things, Monsieur!

THROCKMORTON Your pardon, Majesty—
Of course, if it is true—as Rumour says,
Your Majesty intends to make a marriage
Between the widow and your next son, Charles,
Now minor King—

CATHERINE Monsieur! Your Rumour's English,
Or Huguenot, for, were he French, and Catholic,
As we are, he would more respect our laws,
Which call such unions mere licentious lust.
That question is, at least, disposed of quickly.

THROCKMORTON Your Majesty, it's settled, as you say.
I understand the Queen of Scotland sails
From Calais.

CATHERINE So? And when will she arrive
In Scotland?

THROCKMORTON That, your Majesty, depends—
[LORRAINE *and* GUISE *on loggia. He lowers his voice*]
But on it hangs my reason for requesting
An audience with your Majesty.

CATHERINE Ah?

THROCKMORTON Madame,
If I am blunt, forgive me; but I know
Your time is short—

CATHERINE Go on, my Lord—

THROCKMORTON My Royal Mistress is concerned to know
Your Majesty's opinion on the matter
Of this vexatious Treaty.

CATHERINE Pray, Monsieur—

THROCKMORTON My Mistress much desires close friendship 'twixt
Her realm and yours—

CATHERINE I have had proof of it.
She has shown it by pursuing, here, the policy
She has pursued in Scotland. Wait, Monsieur—
Has she not sent there emissaries to
Undo the faith of Scottish Catholics? Sent
Reformers here, to France, to stimulate
The Huguenots?

THROCKMORTON 'Tis calumny!

CATHERINE I hope so.

THROCKMORTON Well, Madame, may I ask, with due respect,
What attitude you take in this sad quarrel
Between your late son's widow and our Queen?

CATHERINE [*Playing with him again, all smiles*]
'Tis not within my province to incline
Towards one Queen, or the other.

THROCKMORTON But, Madame—
If you would tell me—confidentially—
Suppose the Queen of England were obliged
To intercept upon the seas, the Queen
Of Scotland—if, indeed, she risk the voyage—

CATHERINE Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, you spread your nets
In vain. I am an equal friend to both

The Queens, and will not interfere between them.

[*Turns, to dismiss him.*

THROCKMORTON And yet, your Majesty—one moment—were
A circumstance to arise, in which the Queen,
My Mistress, were to seize the Queen of Scotland,
Would France to war on that account?

CATHERINE In this,
France will have naught to do. Come, come, my Lord!
Desist! It is not seemly we should hold
More discourse on this subject.

[LORRAINE *enters from loggia, crosses to R.U.E., and is about to knock, but* MARY *enters. They converse up Scene, earnestly,* MARY *glancing down towards* CATHERINE. CATHERINE *lowers her voice. To* THROCKMORTON]

If you must
Continue to debate the sorry question,
'Twere better to address the Queen direct
Whom it concerns. But, mark you, France is not
Committed, in the least—in any way!

[*Raises voice*]

So I will say, Adieu, Monsieur—

[THROCKMORTON *bows himself away, L., stands, watching.* LORRAINE *and* GUISE *turn from him, coming down.* MARY, *coming down, meets* CATHERINE.

THROCKMORTON Adieu,
Your Majesty!

CATHERINE [*To* MARY, *kissing her*]
Ma chère! Adieu!

[*To* LORRAINE *and* GUISE]

Adieu,
Your Grace! You stay in France; you shall have audience
On some occasion, later. Adieu, Marie!

MARY [*Would cling to her*]
Adieu—Oh, no! I cannot bear it! I
Would rather stay in France—a hundred times.

CATHERINE [*Presses* MARY *to her. Dissembling*]
Adieu, ma chère! Adieu! Adieu! Adieu!—
[*Turns, pretends to be overcome; hurried exit, down R.*

MARY [*Looks after her, curiously, through tears*]
Adieu—

THROCKMORTON [*Approaches* MARY. *Very businesslike*]
Your Majesty—

MARY [*Drying her eyes.* GUISE *and* LORRAINE *retire to loggia*]
My Lord Throckmorton—
You would have audience with me. Pardon me,
I was forgetting—

THROCKMORTON 'Tis about the Treaty.

MARY [*Smiles through tears*]
My Lord—the Treaty? 'Tis the only subject,
I think, on which I ever hear from England.
When François died, your Lord of Bedford came
With consolations from your Queen, and he
Began as you have done: "Your Majesty—
About that Treaty!"

THROCKMORTON Madame, 'tis a subject
That may be ended by a simple stroke
Upon a bit of parchment.

MARY But that stroke
I'll never make, my Lord. My answer's final.

THROCKMORTON Oh, very well, Madame. And so you mean
To take the boat at Calais?

MARY Calais—? Surely!

THROCKMORTON You will defy the Queen of England, then?

MARY Who is the so-called Queen of England, to
Decree the going out and coming in
To her own kingdom of the Queen of Scotland?

THROCKMORTON [*Cannot answer. Takes another turn; another short stop*]
Come, Madame, once for all! Do you insist
Upon this claim? You still refuse to sign
Renunciation of it? Do you?

MARY Yes,
My Lord! By every law my claim is just.
Born lawfully, derived from Royal Stuarts,
I am the natural Queen of England; she
Who reigns, the natural daughter of King Henry.

THROCKMORTON Beware, Madame—

MARY I speak the truth—

[LORRAINE *and* GUISE *cross the loggia, listen, astonished.*

THROCKMORTON I tell you—

LORRAINE [*Swings down C., followed by* GUISE]
Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, your tone is not
The one in which my Niece, a Royal Lady,
May safely be addressed.

GUISE Do you presume
To threaten Mary Stuart?

[MARY *interposes.*

MARY He presumed—
But I am sure my Lord regrets it— Leave us—

[GUISE *and* LORRAINE *return to loggia, exit from it slowly*]

My Lord Ambassador, be seated. I've
No wish to anger you, or speak in malice—
I state such facts as all men, freely, know.
But I'd not wound your Queen. I'll be content,
As I've already said, and many times,
To wait, if she will name me her successor.

THROCKMORTON That is impossible. My Queen would never
Consent to listen to such talk. Why, Madame,
Would you have her live on, a winding sheet
Perpetually before her eyes?

MARY My Lord,
She speaks quite frequently of epitaphs!
Has she not chos'n her own on which she'd be
Described as Virgin queen? her only Spouse
Her people? I, my Lord, when in my cradle
Was sacredly anointed as the Queen;
My claims, therefore, are just. And yet, my Lord,
I'll say no more of them. I ask, as is
The common right of all, the privilege
Of passing through your country into mine,
That I may meet my ministers of State,
Confer with them on many important matters.

THROCKMORTON I dare say! That reminds me of a point
My Royal Mistress is in mind to settle.
She fears that you intend to make all Scotland
Turn papist?

MARY As all England was, a few
Short years ago? Why, this, my Lord, is meddling!
What! would your Queen, refusing me safe-conduct
Through England, now presume to write our prayers?
My Lord, my subjects will be free to serve their God

As pleases them. But I'm a Catholic,
And baptized in the faith; so shall I live,
So shall I die. My subjects are as free—

THROCKMORTON Ah, very good—

MARY Oh—thank you! But your Queen,
We hear, is not so liberal as that
She may exact such promise from me. It
Is even said that she dissembles her
True faith. She makes laws 'gainst the papists, who,
Encouraged in times past to live in England,
Have trusted to its justice; but, 'tis said,
She hides a crucifix within her closet.
Mine—
[*Takes crucifix up, kisses it*]
I wear openly. But, that point's settled.
Come! what of the safe-conduct?

THROCKMORTON 'Twill be issued
When you have signed the Treaty. Otherwise—

MARY Yes?—otherwise?

THROCKMORTON Well, Madame, otherwise—
You leave France at a risk.

MARY Of what, my Lord?

THROCKMORTON [*After a moment*]
Well, Madame, I have given you the message
Transmitted by the Queen, my Royal Mistress.
I've nothing more to say on her behalf.
But, if you'll state your answer—finally,
And ratify the Treaty—

MARY My Lord,
It is impossible that I proceed
Without the counsel of the lords and nobles
Of my own realm, to have which I must go

Among them. This, in numerous ways, I have
Reiterated to you. Come, my Lord!
What lies behind the signing of this treaty
Which may, in any way, work prejudice
To Queen Elizabeth's affairs? Be open!
Some cogent reasons—not apparent in
Your presentation of your Queen's demands—
There must be for her strange behaviour to me.

THROCKMORTON My Queen's displeasure rises wholly from
Your own ill will, which will not ratify
The Treaty made at Edinburgh.

MARY Then,
My Lord, I pray you, act as may become
An honourable Minister, whose part
It is to make things better between princes
Who disagree, rather than worse. Convey
This message to your Queen—my final one:
The Treaty, as 'twas made, involved the name
Of François, King of France. He, now, is dead—
I have no power to meet Elizabeth's will.
I cannot change the charters that were made
By François, acting as the King of France.
Nor can I, as your Queen exacts, as part
Of this same Treaty, bind, deliver to her,
French Bishops, whom she seeks to punish.

THROCKMORTON So,
You still refuse to ratify the Treaty?

MARY I do, my Lord.

THROCKMORTON Then, Madame, as I said,
You sail at your own risk.

MARY I'll sail, my Lord.
I shall at once embark for Scotland; trust
To the one Judge above to take me safely.

I pray the winds will be so favouring
That I need, nowhere, touch the English coast;
But if I do, and if Elizabeth
Should seize me, why, again, I'll trust to God!
And now, my Lord—your audience is ended.

[*Turns up Scene, where, on threshold,* LORRAINE *stands, alone.* THROCKMORTON *looks after her; infuriated, he clenches his fist; then rushes suddenly for door, L., exits, slamming it after him.*

MARY [*To* LORRAINE, *while looking over sunlit Gardens of St. Germain*]

So, Uncle, I am ready! I will go!
Dear France, I feel I never more shall see you;
But I will go, leaving you half myself—
My two dear treasures: François, and my mother,
Asleep, both of them, in your breast. Adieu—!

CURTAIN

EPISODE TWO

SCENE:—*Queen's Cabinet at* HOLYROOD.
TIME:—*Early evening.*
AT RISE:—MARY SETON *comes down spiral staircase, and hurries to the top of descending stairs, calling.*

SETON Sébastien!
[*A Valet's head appears above the lower stairs*]
Fais vite le souper! Nous
Aurons, ce soir, six couverts! Allez! Allez!
[*Valet exits down stairs.*
Enter, MELVIL, *a big, débonnaire Saxon; a politic, but honest courtier, a bit sly in his enquiries.*

MELVIL Good even, Mistress Seton!
SETON Oh, Monsieur!—
Oh, pardon! All our people, being French—
Is't you, at last, Sir Melvil? You've returned
From England?
MELVIL But a few hours since. I sent
Apprisement of my coming to the Queen.
SETON The French Ambassador is with her, Sir.
But if you'll sit a moment, I will tell her.
MELVIL I passed the Banquet Hall as I came here.
'Twas lighted, brilliantly.
SETON His Grace the King
Is feasting with the Lords; her Majesty,
As 'twere, being in retirement just now.
MELVIL I understand in preparation for
A Royal heir?—'Tis true, then? Well, thank God!

And yet, the King looked not so happy, Mistress.
He was in converse with Red Douglas.

SETON Sir,
His Grace, of late, hath been ill-tempered! He
Is blust'ry as those winds that roar without!

MELVIL 'Tis gossipped he complains the Queen will not
Appease him with the interview he seeks?

SETON Nor will she, Sir, until he mends his manners!

MELVIL Ah, so?

SETON Her Majesty is true offended
Against his Grace.

MELVIL Nay, Mistress, that news grieves me.

SETON The King has ceased to woo, Sir, being married.
He is no longer the assiduous Consort,
But violently jealous of Madame
And every man she looks at—even poor Rizzio,
Whose one fault is that he can sing so well!
The Queen, as you know, loves sweet music. Sir—
I can say this to you, in confidence—
The King's a slave to vices I'd not name!

MELVIL He's young; unused to being King.

SETON And headstrong—
He's tossed about, a very plaything in the hands
Of these rough Lords. Why, Sir, he'd like to wield
Her sceptre! But—I will now to the Queen,
To announce you.

[*Exits into* MARY'S *room, up R., reached by two steps.* MELVIL *takes package of documents from pocket, examines them. Enter,* RIZZIO, *very white, nervous, constrained. He is small, exquisite, but extremely plain, almost ugly.* MELVIL *rises, putting out his hand, cordially.*

MELVIL Signor Rizzio!

RIZZIO Ah, Signore!
Her Majesty will be enchanted. Ah,
Despatches for the Queen?

MELVIL [*Giving letters to* RIZZIO]
Which I deliver
Direct to you, her foreign Secretary.
You seem disturbed, Sir. You're not ill, I trust?

RIZZIO Not in the body, Signor', but 'tis here—
[*Touches temples*]
Strange things have happened since you left for England.
I was, then, in the King's close confidence.
You know, Signore, it was I who urged
Her Majesty to choose Lord Darnley, who,
Though young, seemed finely minded.—For some reason
The King has turned against me.

MELVIL That were wrong.
You did, indeed, induce the Queen to raise
Him to his present dignity, as Consort—

RIZZIO I meant to act well—I meant well, Signore—
Yes, as God hears me, I meant but to serve him—
Yet, more to serve her Majesty, to whom
I owe my all. But now, Sir, now he's King—

MELVIL Will you not sit, Sir? You are pale. What is
It troubles you, Signore?

RIZZIO I am weak,
And terrified—I own it! I have been
Within the day with one who prophesies
My death, Sir, by foul means, and I have been,
Of late, oft threatened—

MELVIL Every man is so
Whom Royalty confides in.

RIZZIO But, Sir Melvil—

MELVIL Trust me, the Scots are very quick to threaten,
Yet slow, in general, to act.

[*Enter* SETON. MELVIL *signs to* RIZZIO *to restrain himself before her.*

SETON The Queen
Desires you, Sir, to enter. You, Signore,
Would best attend her Majesty. There is
Some correspondence to be done, with Spain—

[RIZZIO *exits, after* MELVIL, *into* QUEEN'S *room. As* QUEEN'S *door closes, enter* DARNLEY. *Younger, by five years, than* MARY. *He is flushed, clearly under the influence of drink.*

DARNLEY Well, Mistress, is the Queen disposed to see
The King this even?

SETON The Queen, your Grace, just now,
Holds audience.

DARNLEY With her Secretary, Rizzio?

SETON Her Secretary's with her Majesty.

DARNLEY I knew it!

[*Darts from room, exits, down R.*

SETON In his cups again! Poor Madame!
What trials for one brought up as she was! What
A rage he is in, this time! I'll go in—
He shall not vent it on poor Mary Seton!

[*Exits into* QUEEN'S *room. As she opens door, sound of lute heard, and a soft tenor voice singing. Ere door is fully closed, enter, precipitately,* DARNLEY, *followed by* RED DOUGLAS, RUTHVEN, *and another.*

DARNLEY I say it is ten thousand crimes I must
Endure to see this primping foreign upstart
Preferred to me! Upon the least occasion
They chatter French, while he gabs rhymes to her,
Or bawls Italian ditties!

DOUGLAS Let's to business!

DARNLEY She claps him when he bleats, and even, herself,
Twangs on the viol for him! Listen!

DOUGLAS It is well known our honest fiddlers and
Our pipers furnish Madame with amusement
Of quite another sort!

[*Faint applause heard in* QUEEN'S *room.*

DARNLEY You hear, my Lords?
They are laughing! She is making merry with them,
Believing I, her husband, feast elsewhere!
Her Majesty has time for favourites,
Yet, for two days, her valet, Paris—or
That damned Sébastien—or her Mistress Seton
Have barred my way whenever I have sought
A word with my own lawful wife! And yet,
My Lords, 'tis not her doing, I would swear it;
She's counselled to it by the Secretary.
He interferes, my Lords, with everything
In Scotland; keeps the Queen from crowning me
As I should be crowned—as François, her spouse
Before me, was crowned! I am Stuart, too!
And after Mary, rightful heir to England.

RUTHVEN True! true!

DARNLEY But helpless, while this foreign fellow,
Her Secretary—of the Muses, lives!

DOUGLAS His Grace the King is right. This Rizzio has
By far too great an influence upon
Her Majesty.

DARNLEY Well, then?—What, then, my Lords?
You've given me your word. Will you remove
him?

DOUGLAS My Lords, I'm with the young King—but on one
Condition. Ruthven—Carew—we have all
Agreed upon it.

DARNLEY Name it, then; but hasten!

DOUGLAS That you, being rid of Rizzio, my Lord,
Whose influence with the Queen is perilous,
Once power is in your hands to issue edicts,
Will pardon Murray, my half-brother and
The Queen's, and all his followers with him; all
Who have been banished by the Queen, and pine
In England.

DARNLEY Murray plots there with Elizabeth,
Even as he did in Scotland, 'gainst the Queen.
He's too ambitious; and Elizabeth
Sees in me, too, no less than in your Queen,
A rival! Oh, well, what you like! I promise—

DOUGLAS [*Takes out a paper, spreads it on table*]
Good!

RUTHVEN Very good!

DOUGLAS We'll take your signature,
Your Grace, to that agreement.

DARNLEY [*Hesitates, then signs recklessly*]
There! 'tis signed.
Now, gentlemen, preliminaries being
Arranged, we meet tomorrow to conclude
Our plans. We will appoint each one his part.
You've chosen your weapon, Douglas? Ruthven?
Carew?

[*As he is named, each one draws his weapon.*

As they do so, the door opens suddenly, and MARY *enters, stops on threshold.*

MARY So, Darnley—you, my Lords, presume to hold
A secret council in my cabinet?

DARNLEY I will explain—

MARY 'Tis useless, Sir. I am
Informed of what you plot to do, my Lords,
But I will seek and find the remedy!

[*She re-enters her room. The door closes, audibly. Momentary silence.*

DOUGLAS Your Grace, if what we plot is known to Madame,
Our game is one of life and death. 'Tis not
The cleverest will win here, but the quickest!
What we've to do must be accomplished now;
If not, we die tomorrow! All of us!

RUTHVEN I'm ready, Douglas.

DARNLEY And I'm ready!

[*Rushes to* QUEEN'S *door, tries it*]
Locked!
And Rizzio is with her! By my soul—

DOUGLAS 'Twere better so. Let's wait without, and get
Him later as he leaves the Palace. Deeds
Such as we do are not for women's eyes.

DARNLEY By God! I'll strike her Majesty, through him!
I'll have it done, and well done, in her presence!

RUTHVEN Your Grace, we will accomplish all you'd have us!
But let us out, first, find the men who are
Engaged to help us.

[*They exit, through curtained door, down R.* SETON, *a moment later, opens* QUEEN'S *door, peeps out.*

SETON Madame! They are gone!

[*Enter, on* MELVIL'S *arm,* MARY. *Behind her*

RIZZIO *with the* FRENCH AMBASSADOR, *deep in conversation; also,* CAMDEN, *a silent member of the party. They come down towards table.*

MARY Go, bid Sébastien bring the supper in.

[SETON *exits down stairs. Thereafter, as conversation proceeds,* SÉBASTIEN *enters with jugs, goblets, etc., and proceeds to set the supper on the table*]

Be seated, gentlemen. Go on, Sir Melvil;
You were about to tell the latest jest
In London.

MELVIL Madame, gentlemen! The jest
Concerns a lady—

MARY Naturally! Go on!

MELVIL This lady, as a proof of her regard,
Bestowed on Oxford University
A pair of shoes that once encased her feet—

[RIZZIO *and* FRENCH AMBASSADOR *exchange glances.*

SETON *returns, sits at table, amused, listens.*

MARY How generous!

MELVIL The very word, Madame,
To fit the case. If rumour's true, they'd fit
A man—well, say—about my size!

[*All laugh except* RIZZIO.

MARY 'Twere well
The lady's gauge in everything were measured
By those same feet! Her head's depository,
I'm told, of learning most unusual.—Melvil,
While we are waiting, please the company
By telling them, as you have told to me,

The items of your earlier mission to
Elizabeth.

[*To* FRENCH AMBASSADOR]

'Tis most amusing! Mind you tell it to
My uncle Guise when you return to France!
'Twas after I had routed the old Earl
Of Huntly. As you know, Monsieur, the Earl,
Like others 'mong these most contentious Lords
Of Scotland, wished to prove himself above
His Queen in power. So I, in turn, played soldier!
Tell that, as well, Monsieur, to my dear uncle.
'Twill entertain him, vastly, I am sure!
I passed whole days encased in mail and lived
In saddle, sleeping in my tent! 'Twas glorious!
A shield here, on my arm, a broadsword here,
I, Mary Stuart, put milord to flight,
And caught the Scottish fancy, for a time!
They called me their own Mary, seemed to love me!
And carried me in state to Edinburgh!
Then, knowing not what 'twas they asked of me,
They sent me long petitions, begging me
To wed again, at once.

[*She is pensive for a moment; then resumes rather drolly*]

There was one Prince—
From Austria—but, poor Rizzio, here—

RIZZIO Madame—

MARY As blind as were my people—swore that should
I marry any foreign Prince, my claims
Upon the crown of England would be perilled.
That claim, as you all know, I'll never yield!
I was anointed to it in the Church.
And yet I mean not soon to press the matter,

For I love not so much to wear a crown.
This one, of thistles, not yet come to down,
Already presses far too sharply on
My brow. But, as good Rizzio urged it—

RIZZIO Madame, I
Am in despair, if you will pardon me
For saying so before the gentlemen,
For any part I may have had in bringing
About a union that now promises—

MARY Nay, Rizzio, I am in no blaming mood.
Still, 'twas in deference to you, who are
So skilled and practised in diplomacy—
[*He protests*]
Well, then, in music, and in poetry—
I sent Sir Melvil, first, to England, to
The Queen, who, as a learned virgin, might
So well instruct me how to choose a Consort—
Do you go on, now, Melvil, with the tale—

MELVIL I fear, your Majesty, the story's long.
However, to be brief as brief may be,
The royal lady whom I visited,
And whom our Queen outwitted in the voyage
From France; whose earlier royal spite has been
Allayed by Madame's gentle correspondence;
The royal lady whom I visited,
Was very gracious, if surprisingly
Uncertain in her counsels. Er—for instance;
At first she urged Lord Leicester as a party
Upon whose union with our Majesty
Of Scotland she would look approvingly—
But here, 'twas first she would, and then she wouldn't—
I need not name the reason—you all know it!

Well, getting to the pleasant topic of
Our Queen—" Now, tell me," said Elizabeth,
" Is she as beautiful as people say? "
I said: " She is considered beautiful! "
But, as I lacked a standard by which I
Could make comparison, the lady said:
" Come, now! Be frank! I'll give you one: Is she
As beautiful as I am? "

[*Prolonged laughter. Only* RIZZIO *does not join in it*]

Then, without
A smile I answered—as a wise man should:
" Your Majesty's the loveliest woman in England!
Our Queen is loveliest in Scotland."

MARY Ah,
Melvil's not wanting in diplomacy!

MELVIL " But which of us is taller? " asked the Queen,
Less satisfied, my friends, than you, with my
Reply: " My mistress, Madame! " " Then she is
Too tall; for I am tall as any woman
Should be! " " What are her recreations, Sir? "
" She hunts, your Majesty, and rides, and plays
The lute and harpsichord." " Does she play well? "
" Why, yes, your Majesty; she plays quite well—
Even very well, I may say, for a Queen! "

[*He ceases to imitate, and speaks, confidentially, as all at table move to take up the goblets which* SÉBASTIEN *has been filling.*

Enter, silently, through the curtained doorway, DARNLEY, *who takes his place behind* MARY'S *chair. Only* RIZZIO *perceives him, and he sits, transfixed, staring*

at DARNLEY, *whose eyes are fixed upon him*]

And, gentlemen, my word of honour on't—

[*Catches* RIZZIO'S *look of horror, turns, perceives* DARNLEY, *and stops short.*

MARY What is it, Melvil?

[*She follows his glance, looks at* DARNLEY]

Sir, what do you here?

[*Enter, in rough armour, and ghastly white,* RUTHVEN. *Behind him* DOUGLAS, *and, following him,* CAREW. *They remain in the background, but in the torchlight their armour gleams*]

Why are you armed, my Lords, here, in the Palace?

RUTHVEN Nay, Madame, 'tis his business. Ask the King!

MARY My Lord, what is the meaning of your strange
Forgetfulness of the proprieties?

DARNLEY It means that man must leave this place, at once!

MARY That gentleman, my Lord, is in my service!
Therefore, he takes no orders, but from me!

RIZZIO [*Edges toward her, his teeth chattering*]
My Lord—Madame—

DARNLEY Ho, Douglas! Ruthven! Carew!

[*Enter, mercenaries, who, led by* DOUGLAS *and* RUTHVEN, *rush for* RIZZIO, *about whom the* QUEEN'S *party crowd to save him. Chairs, table are overturned in the fracas.* RIZZIO, *at last, falls to knees, clinging to* MARY'S *skirt and crying out.*

MELVIL Good God!

MARY How dare you, brutes?

RIZZIO Giustizia!

SETON [*Trying, with* MARY, *to protect him*]
God!

MARY Away, I say! My Lords! Help! Help!

DARNLEY Proceed!

MARY Forbear, my Lords! How dare you?

DARNLEY At him! At him!

RIZZIO Giustizia!

MARY Mercy! Help! Help!

SETON Mercy! Mercy!

[CAREW, *suddenly, springs to* MARY *herself, and holds his knife to her breast, while the others fall like a pack of hounds upon* RIZZIO, *stabbing at him.*

MELVIL Good God! Her Majesty—

[DARNLEY *seizes* MARY *about waist, pulls her away.*

MARY Help! Help!

SETON Help! Help!

DARNLEY Come! Is he not dead yet?

RUTHVEN [*Staggers to his feet, waving his knife*]
He's dead, your Grace!

DARNLEY [*Releases* MARY]
Then pitch him in the courtyard!

[*The assassins seize* RIZZIO'S *body, drag it towards curtained doors.* RUTHVEN, *to* SÉBASTIEN, *pale with terror.*

RUTHVEN Bring me wine!

MARY [*To him*]
How dare you, in the presence of your Queen!

RUTHVEN Nay, I have earned a drink! It is not insolence!
I'm tired! This exercise is most unusual;
Still, it was needful, for I serve the King!

[*Enter,* GEORGE DOUGLAS, *drawn sword in*

hand. Behind him terrified nobles. They stop in the curtained doorway.

GEORGE Your Majesty—your Grace—

[*Catches sight of* RIZZIO'S *body, at his feet*]

Good God! What's here?

DARNLEY Be good enough to leave us. Nothing has
Been done here but by Royal orders. Go!

[*The Lords, in trouble, sheathe their swords, and exit.*

MARY [*At door to her room; to* DARNLEY]

My Lord, you have slain more than David Rizzio.
More than his death your bestial cruelty
Has slain my heart; set in its place
A thing of stone. But him I hold here, if
You have not killed him with the self-same stroke,
Shall take revenge for these unnatural insults!

[*Enters her room,* SETON *following.*

CURTAIN

EPISODE THREE

SCENE:—*A prison room in Lochleven. A barred window overlooks the loch. L., a bedroom. Up R., a diagonal doorway that leads to anteroom. The huge doors are open. The furnishings of the room consist of two stools, one with a broken leg; one old armchair, a table and a cracked mirror on the wall.*

The time is late afternoon deepening into night.

DISCOVERED:—MARY, *seated before the barred window. The last rays of the declining sun light up her face. She holds a bit of embroidery, but stitches fitfully.*

AT RISE:—*She takes a stitch or two; drops work, leans forward, looking out of the window. Enter, from bedroom,* MARY SETON.

SETON You called me, Madame? Is your thread run out?

MARY No, Seton.—If I called, it was unwitting.

[*Picks up work again, but does not stitch. Looks out of window*]

I'm thinking of the trivial circumstances
That may suffice to rouse a prisoner's
Attention.

SETON What is new, Madame?

MARY That light—
See how it twinkles 'mong those trees across
The loch!

SETON But, Madame, we have seen that, oft,
Before.

MARY True!—True! For many nights. Yet now
The flickering motion of it, 'gainst the still
Black leaves, has something in't that comforts. Seton,
How long have we been prisoned in Lochleven?

SETON Some twenty months, Madame.

MARY Some twenty months!
Was ever one short life so full of strange
Vicissitudes! Poor Rizzio!

SETON God has punished
His murderer, Madame!

MARY True, and punished me,
Who have, since Darnley's death, been tossed about
Like a frail ship without a rudder, on
The wild sea of my own tempestuous nature!
The Cardinal, my uncle, warned me 'gainst it.
'Twas doubly necessary, could he but
Have known the harsh, unruly contests here
For power; the animosities, the envies,
The plottings and contentions everywhere!
Oh, when I think of France and see about me
Stone walls—black waters—no news from without
Save what my gaoler, Douglas, is disposed
To impart to me—

SETON Dear Madame, do not weep;
Come! dry your eyes. Someone is coming! There—

[*Enter, a Steward, with a hamper, which he sets down, up L. At a sign from* DOUGLAS, *who follows him in, he exits.*

MARY [*Without raising her eyes. To* SETON]
Let him not spread the table. I want nothing.
I'll spare my Lord the performance of his duty
As Royal taster!

DOUGLAS [*To* SETON; *then to* MARY]
'Tis not supper, Mistress.
This is your washing, Madame. As to tasting,
I have small relish for such service, which
I do but render as a courtesy
To give assurance to a doubting guest.

MARY A guest? You guard your guests with iron bars
In Scotland? Keep them under lock and key?

DOUGLAS 'Tis useless to discuss those things, Madame.
Enough to say, I have a letter here
Addressed to you.
[*Hands letter to* SETON, *from whom* MARY *takes it, eagerly.*

MARY A letter—here—to me?
From Murray. You are well informed, no doubt,
Concerning its purport?

DOUGLAS I am.

MARY I thought so;
For Murray, who's half-brother to us both—
Of different mothers,—mine, alas, is dead,—
But yours, and his— He would, of course, inform
His mother of the honours he has assumed.

DOUGLAS He would, Madame; and he has written us.

MARY And so my brother, Murray, upon whom
I've showered kindnesses, though well informed
Of his astute intriguing with the Court
Of England and with rebel lords of Scotland,
Requites me by assuming my own sceptre!

DOUGLAS Our brother, Madame, is made Regent—yes!
He will repair the wrongs which favourites,
Both foreigners and Scottish, have inflicted
Upon the people.

MARY Will he also right
The wrongs your people have done Mary Stuart?
For some they have done—cruel, cruel wrongs.
As for the favourites—are favourites
Such novelties in Scotland? James, my father,
Had favourites, men, and women, of which Murray,
My brother Murray, and your brother, now the Regent,
Is living testimony.

DOUGLAS Madame—

MARY Spare me!
'Tis useless to discuss these things, Lord Douglas.

[*Picks up embroidery.* DOUGLAS *stamps towards door, turns there to speak; thinks better of it, exits.*

SETON Dear Madame! Can it be Lord Murray is
Made Regent?

MARY It appears he has assumed
The office. 'Tis not legal till I say so!
Ah, Seton, I remember when we sailed
From Calais, how I wept at sight of those
Poor wretches who were tossed upon the waves.
Say—who was right, then, you or I, who saw
In it an evil sign? 'Twas prophecy!

SETON Dear Madame, try to think of other things!
This melancholy is increasing! Courage!

MARY Ah, courage is no easy thing, my dear,
For one struck right and left by such misfortunes!

SETON Dear Madame—

MARY Listen, Seton—what is that?

SETON [*Rises, looks out of window, pressing her face against the bars*]
Some entertainment is on hand. The Court

And landings are quite crowded. Some are armed!

MARY
Armed men come not to festivals! Good God!
My enemies! Lord Lindsay's there, who brought
Us here! But there is Melvil, too.

SETON
Well, then,
Take courage, Madame. If Sir Melvil's with them—

MARY
He is a man of peace, but Ruthven, Lindsay—
[*A muffled knocking is heard on outer door*]
What violent knocking! See who 'tis!

SETON
[*Hurries into anteroom. Seen in depths, against door, listening; then she hurriedly returns.*
Your Majesty!
Oh, summon all your fortitude.

MARY
Who is it?

SETON
Lords Lindsay, Ruthven, Melvil. They are come
In Murray's name. Oh God, my Lady! I
Am sure some other mischief's brewing! I'll
Not open to them. Oh, my Lady—
[*Knocking becomes louder.* SETON *would support* MARY.

MARY
No,
It is nothing; I shall be myself again.
That fatal name of Ruthven! Oh, the butcher!
Yes! Something dreadful brings them, surely. Still,
As they are come from Murray, my half-brother,
Engage to stop them for a moment, that
I may appear to have my wits about me.
[*Almost totters into bedroom.* LINDSAY'S *voice is heard from behind outer door.*

LINDSAY
Come, open! We're ambassadors!

SETON Well, Sirs,
And are ambassadors exempt from manners?
Wait, Sirs, upon your Sovereign's pleasure, as
Good honest Scotsmen should do!

[*The outer door is shaken violently.* SETON *hurriedly closes the big door, and looks about distractedly for the bar for it, listening, the while, to the voices on the other side of the door, now clearer and louder.*

LINDSAY'S VOICE By St. Andrew!
I'll smash it open if you force me to it!

MELVIL [*In anteroom. As she cannot find bar for it,* SETON *thrusts her arm through the staples of big door*]
My Lord, let's wait a moment for Lord Ruthven!

LINDSAY [*Pounding on big doors*]
I will not wait a second. Villain! Did
You not declare the bar had been removed?

SETON It has been so, my Lord; but with my arm
Thrust through the staples I will hold it!

LINDSAY I'll break it, Mistress, as I would a willow!

SETON [MARY *enters, stops, in opening of bedroom*]
Yet, till you do, my Lord, I stand—

MARY Come, Mary—
Obey me. Open!

[SETON *withdraws her arm. The doors burst open. Enter* LINDSAY, *in a rusty suit of armour. He has a huge sword strapped across his back, the hilt at left shoulder, the point clanking on floor. He is gauntleted, mailed; brutal in every respect. Behind him,* MELVIL, *in black velvet doublet and cap, small sword, as indication of rank, only.*

LINDSAY [*Stamping in; to* SETON]
Well! Where is she, eh?
Has she not kept us long enough without
That we must wait within? Or, does she think
She still holds Court here?

MELVIL Good, my Lord, let's wait
For Ruthven, since there's nothing can be done
Without him.

LINDSAY He may wait who chooses. I
Will not bide on her pleasure. I will find her,
Wherever she is hiding.

MARY Good my Lord
Of Lindsay—
[LINDSAY *involuntarily inclines; but at once straightens up*]
We've detained you; but a woman
Does not, right willingly, receive even enemies,
Without a thought given to her toilette. It
Is true men are less giv'n to ceremony—
Good morrow, Melvil. Welcome to our prison,
E'en as we ever welcomed you and yours
To palaces.
[*To* LINDSAY]
Your weapon's weighty. You,
Mayhap, are on your guard against some enemy?
If not, 'tis strange adornment to put on
In visiting a woman. But, no matter;
I am a Stuart; too much of a Stuart
To fear a sword, though it be naked.
[LINDSAY *swirls his weapon round, tries its point on ground as he speaks.*

LINDSAY This one
Is in its place, here, Madame. 'Tis an old

Acquaintance of your family. Your father,
King James, the fifth, was threatened with it, once,
At Buccleugh! What is more, some time ago,
At Carberry Hill, the infamous traitor, Bothwell,
Who dared an honest man to hold him guilty
Of Darnley's murder, had a glimpse of it.
And had his cowardice been one whit less
I would have done such work with this good steel,
That hounds and carrion crows should have found morsels
Along the road, already cut for them!

[MELVIL *and* SETON *eye each other, horrified.*

MARY My Lord, it is not hard to strike an enemy
Who is unarmed, who stands quite at your mercy.
Were Mary Stuart heir to James's sword,
As she is to his sceptre, your blade, Lindsay,
Long as it is, might still prove far too short.
But you have not come here for idle boasting.
We pray your pardon if we bring you back
To something of more int'rest.

[*Enter* LORD RUTHVEN, *behind him a Steward with parchments.*

LINDSAY Since my Lord
Of Ruthven favours us, we can proceed
Upon our mission.

[RUTHVEN *is in buff coat; undress Court dress. The Steward places papers on table, spreads them out, moves the one chair into position for* RUTHVEN, *and turns to adjust the torches in wall sockets. As he turns,* MARY *sweeps royally to the chair and sits.*

MARY Pray proceed, my Lords.
I wait the purpose of your mission. Is't

Of such a nature that two warriors, so
Renowned as you, Lord Lindsay, you, Lord Ruthven,
Still hesitate to pass it on to me?

[*Steward exits.*

RUTHVEN However painful it may be, Madame,
A Ruthven never hesitates before
His duty. You, no doubt, by your duress,
Are now prepared to hear what we have come
To say, as spokesmen for the Secret Council.

MARY A body I established? By what right,
Sirs, does the Secret Council dare to act
Without me? But, no matter. I presume
'Tis some petition which implores my mercy
For those who've dared usurp the power which I
Hold, God-appointed?

RUTHVEN Quite the opposite.
To offer you a pardon from the Council.

MARY Nay, really! That's so novel an idea
It downs my anger!—But, my Lord, go on!

RUTHVEN The pardon's offered on conditions which
Are set forth in these deeds.

MARY Am I to read them?
Or is it I'm to sign them with closed eyes,
Confiding in the motives of my Lords?

RUTHVEN The Secret Council wishes you to have
Full cognizance of their contents; and that
You sign them of your own free will, Madame.

MARY Pray read them, then—I think it is your duty;
Not all this pother of "the early age"
At which began my reign in Scotland—nor
These paragraphs that talk of my fatigue
Arising from the task of governing—
But here; begin, my Lord.

RUTHVEN [*Reading*]
"By these, our letters, made in free good will,
I here renounce, demit the Crown of Scotland,
In favour of my infant son; entrusting
Lord Lindsay and Lord Ruthven, in my name,
To represent me; to renounce for me,
Before the clergy, burgesses, and people,
Assembled, all, at Stirling, guidance, crown,
And government of Scotland," dated, signed,
Et cetera. Well, Madame, you have heard it!

MARY I heard, yet to my ears, which for some time
Have been obliged to listen to strange things,
It seemed as 'twere some rebels falsifying
The honour of Lord Lindsay, and Lord Ruthven.

LINDSAY Our "honour"! from a woman who has been
So careless in the guarding of her own?

MELVIL My Lord—

MARY Be silent, Melvil. Though I have
No sword, I have a buckler in my conscience,
Strong as the coat-of-mail which so discreetly
Protects my Lord of Lindsay.
[*To* RUTHVEN]
So, my Lord,
All that my loving subjects want of me
Is date, and signature, by which
I fling my sceptre down and take to turning
A distaff? 'Tis a gen'rous offer, truly.
But you've another paper. Something more
You'd have me sign?

RUTHVEN A deed, whereby your Grace
Confirms the action of the Secret Council,
Who have appointed your beloved brother,
The Earl of Murray, Regent of the Kingdom

MARY Oh! This is touching! Really touching, Sirs!
My brother, upon whom I have conferred
His every title, raising him from Prior
To be a man of power in Scotland, now
Would have me add another title to
Those I've already given him!—My Lords,
Go back to those who sent you. Say that to
Demands of this sort Mary Stuart makes
No answer. She has none to make!

RUTHVEN Beware!
Your pardon will be granted solely on
Condition that you sign.

MARY If I refuse?

RUTHVEN Your Grace knows well the laws. Adultery
And murder are high crimes, for which, already,
Here, and in England, more than one Queen has
Paid penalty, by death.

MARY Upon what proof
Am I accused of crimes like these? I, who
Have all at stake, may surely know?

RUTHVEN The proof
Cannot be questioned. It lies in the marriage
Between Lord Darnley's widow and his murd'rer.

MARY [*With emotion*]
If he was murdered—I know nothing; save
That God himself avenged the brutal crime
Which Darnley instigated, watching while
'Twas done! I did, indeed, rejoice, when vengeance
O'ertook him; as did many here in Scotland,
Resentful that an English Lord should share
My throne, which they themselves so longed to do.
They clamored, all, to have a Scottish King!

Well, Sirs, who was it hurried me to put
Aside my mourning, and to marry Bothwell?
I hold the papers which you signed, my Lord
Of Ruthven, you, too, Lindsay; only Melvil
Entreated me against it. All the rest,
For your own reasons, said to be of State,
Devised that marriage as a trap for me,
A young and ignorant woman, hedged about by false,
Perfidious advisers.

RUTHVEN Madame, this
But begs the present question, which is, whether
Your life and honour being conceded you,
You will consent to abdicate the throne
Of Scotland?

MARY Were I willing, where's the pledge
The promise you make in these papers would
Be kept?

RUTHVEN Our word of honour, Madame.

MARY Ah,
A feeble guaranty from Lords, who can
So soon forget the deeds you signed so short
A time ago. I'd need a trifle more
To assure me.

LINDSAY Ruthven, for an hour this woman
Has answered to our propositions with
Bold insults!

MELVIL Wait, my Lords, in Heaven's name!
Make some allowance for one who is accustomed
These years to give command; yet who, today,
Has no choice left but to obey us.

LINDSAY Then,
In God's name, Melvil, use your honied words
And get the answer which our plain demand

Fails to draw from her. Ruthven, come! We'll give
You fifteen minutes, Melvil.

[*He goes out, sword clanking behind him.* RUTHVEN *follows.*

MELVIL [*Dropping on one knee*]
Madame, you
Awhile ago deplored you had not followed
My earlier advice. That which I now
Would offer is of greater import, far,
Than that was. Madame, your regret will be
Still bitterer, if now you fail to heed me.
You know not what may happen, cannot dream
Of what Lord Murray may be capable.

MARY This night has given me proof, sufficient strong,
Of his great powers. What more, now, can he do
Than he has done? Bring me to public trial?
I'll ask for nothing better. Let me free
To plead my cause, and you will see if Judges
Will dare condemn me!

MELVIL 'Tis for that good reason
They'll carefully avoid a trial, Madame.
Here, you are safer for them, guarded by
Sworn enemies; no witness here, but God,
Who, though He avenges crime, alas, does not
Forewarn the victim, be his fate the sword,
Or—poison!

MARY Melvil, I would welcome death
As expiation for my many faults.
I'm proud, at times, I know; yet humble, when
I search my conscience. I am most unjustly
Accused of that which has to do with Darnley,
Yet justly censured for my act with Bothwell.

MELVIL Madame, a moment only's left to us!

Come! Make the best that may be, in your plight.
You are alone, immured in enemy castle,
With but one woman, Mistress Seton, by you.
My Liege, an abdication that's compelled
In circumstances like to these about you,
Your subjects will refuse to credit.
They will be sure it was extorted from you;
And, Madame, when the time's propitious to
Enforce your protest, you will have at least
Two witnesses on whom you may rely—
You, Mistress Mary Seton, will be one—
The other—here—your Melvil—

SETON Oh, Sir Melvil—

LINDSAY [*Clanks in, with* RUTHVEN *following*]
Well, Madame, are you ready?

RUTHVEN Pray, remember,
Your answer must be plain, and definite.
No mental reservations, Madame!

MARY Nay,
You are exacting. You'd not ask such right
Were I at liberty, surrounded by
A trusty escort. Being behind these bars—
But you would have my signature. Sir Melvil,
Please pass the pen to me.

RUTHVEN I hope, however,
You've not in mind a later protest, based
Upon the bars to which you now allude?

MARY [*Rising indignantly*]
My Lords, you asked me for an abdication.
I was about to sign it; but, if you
Add to the first demand, that written here—
That I renounce my rights of my own motion,

As if I deemed myself unfit to reign,
I will not sign! No! never!

LINDSAY [*With his gauntleted hand, seizes her by the wrist*]
Now, I warn you,
Our patience is exhausted. Madame, sign!
Else we may end in breaking that which will
Not bend!

[MARY *looks at him steadily, the others recoiling. Under her gaze* LINDSAY *drops her hand. She turns back her sleeve; shows a deep purple mark, of fingers.*

MARY There is no further obstacle,
My Lords Ambassadors. Here is the proof
My will has not been forced. I freely sign.
[*Writes*]
"I hereby abdicate the throne of Scotland!"—

[*Lays pen down; passes, with royal sweep, into bedroom.* SETON *following, in silence.*

RUTHVEN [*Gathers up his papers*]
Your method, Lindsay, is not usual
In matters diplomatic, yet I own
It's most effective.

LINDSAY Nay, were I convinced
That she is innocent of all she's charged with,
I promise you no man should harm a hair
That's growing on her head.

RUTHVEN So? Blows the wind
That way? I have heard said no man may look
Upon her, and not love her; yet, who'd think
Lord Lindsay so susceptible to tears
And melting voice!

LINDSAY Enough, my Lord of Ruthven!
We understand each other, do we not?

[*Enter* DOUGLAS, *followed by* GEORGE DOUGLAS.

DOUGLAS Till the Commissioners have supped, do you
Keep guard here, George.
[*To* LORDS]
My Lords, the supper is
Set on the table.

RUTHVEN I'll do justice to it.

LINDSAY [*Follows* DOUGLAS *and* RUTHVEN *out*]
And I will, Douglas, that I promise you!

[*The door is heard to close on their exit.*
GEORGE DOUGLAS, *alone, stands motionless for a moment; then crosses, seizes a torch from the wall, and waves it before window; replaces it in wall socket. Then, crosses again and knocks on bedroom door.* SETON *looks out, startled.*

GEORGE No outcry, Mistress. I would see her Majesty
Alone.

MARY [*Emerges from room, her arm about* SETON]
I am alone with Mistress Seton.
She is my other self, my sister. You?

GEORGE I, Madame, am George Douglas—

MARY You, a Douglas?
And you, a Douglas, kneel to me?

GEORGE Two Douglases—

[*Goes to anteroom, beckons. Enter* LITTLE DOUGLAS, *a slender lad of twelve, in page's dress*]
Who come to serve you. Little Douglas, here,
Is orphaned; he has heart of gold, and head
Of steel.

LITTLE DOUGLAS And lays them both before you, Madame.

MARY I do not understand.

GEORGE Our time is short;
I must speak rapidly. My Liege, I saw
You, years ago, in France—

MARY In France?

GEORGE Since when my heart has held no other image—
Nay, Madame, do not turn away. I crossed
The Channel in the galley which brought you
To Scotland; served among the Royal Guards
In your campaign 'gainst Huntly;—later, too,
As guard, at Holyrood—

MARY Can this be true?
I saw you not—at any time.

GEORGE I'm used
To pass through life unnoticed, Madame; but,
I come to lay my love, my life, my all
Here, at your feet—

MARY [*Raises him*]
Unhappy man! And yet
How sweet to hear there still remains one heart
That loves me! Bless you, Douglas!
[*Wipes eyes, looks up*]
Lord, to Thee
I render thanks—

GEORGE Your Majesty can see
That light across the loch? It is a signal
Made by a waiting army. Read! Read this—
[*Gives her a paper. She scans it, amazed.*

MARY "Thus we, the undersigned Lords, Barons, Earls—"
What purports this? These pledge themselves to lead
Me from Lochleven? But the means to leave it?
[DOUGLAS *signs to* LITTLE DOUGLAS, *who tosses white linen articles from the hamper*

up Scene and brings to light two suits of livery, like his own.

GEORGE They're here, if you will don this livery,
And follow Little Douglas through the throng
Of servants who have crossed the loch this even
To aid in 'tending the ambassadors.

MARY Oh God, Sir, is this true? You come not here
To mock? A way has opened, then, to freedom?

GEORGE If you, by sheer audacity, will take it.
Three thousand Scotsmen wait upon yon hill
Who'll gladly die for you—

MARY No, no! Not die!
Behind me lies, already, a trail of blood;
I would not add to it, even for a kingdom.
Three thousand men are but a handful, 'gainst
My enemies. To combat were mere slaughter!
But, could they guard me to the seacoast, or,
Safe to the English border—

GEORGE Madame—

MARY Well
I know it is impossible for me,
For Mary Stuart, to remain in Scotland;
But, might I reach, get aid from France, or Spain,
Or England, which lies nearest, and on which
I hold some claims for hospitality—

GEORGE On England? Madame, 'tis extraordinary—

MARY So are my sorrows, Douglas. England's Queen
It may be is misled by envious Murray.
She is reputed hard; she may be so;
But, then, she is a Queen. She will not fail—
For we have had a friendly correspondence—
When I, her sister sovereign, ask her help!
Besides, I have her promise that she will

Receive me; give me sanctuary. Thence,
I can communicate with France, return
Within the year with reinforcements; bring
An army to support these loyal Scotsmen!

[*Sounds of revelry, and piping from Court below.*

GEORGE God grant your Majesty's confiding heart
Be not mistaken thus to trust yourself
To England. I entreat you, Madame, hasten!
I, to avert suspicion, must go now.
You may confide yourself to Little Douglas,
Who'll guide you safely to the landing
Where you will find a boat, full manned, in waiting.
This livery will fit your Majesty;
'Twas measured by good Mistress Mary Fleming!

MARY One of my own four Marys! Bless you, Sir.
That word's a passport to completest trust!

[*Exits into bedroom, with* SETON *carrying liveries.*

DOUGLAS Now, Laddie, 'tis your turn to show yourself
A loyal servant to the loveliest Queen
And most unfortunate lady in the world!
Here are the keys. Give me your counterfeits;
Lock all the doors behind you as you pass;
'Twill hinder them if there should be alarm.
You know the signal? First, the waving torch
To tell the army that the Queen is coming—

LITTLE DOUGLAS An owl's hoot at the window, and away!

GEORGE Ah, Cousin, what you do tonight would make
More than one older Scotsman envious!

[*Sudden shaking of outer door*]

God!

[*Hurriedly drops* LITTLE DOUGLAS *into the*

hamper, piles the linen on him, closes it. Exits into anteroom, returns, preceded by DOUGLAS]

My Lord—

DOUGLAS You've been on guard here, constantly?

GEORGE Continually. The pris'ners have retired,
As it would seem, taking some umbrage at
My presence.

DOUGLAS They are insolent, as usual.
Well, I'll relieve you, in an hour.
[*Accompanying him*]
Meanwhile,
I'll interview the outer guards.

[*The closing of door upon them is heard.* LITTLE DOUGLAS *gets out of hamper, goes centre, seizes a torch from wall and waves it three times before the window. Hurriedly replaces it, and knocks on the bedroom door.*

Re-enter, MARY, *and* MARY SETON, *in page's dress.*

LITTLE DOUGLAS My Lady
If you are ready—

SETON Little Douglas, I
Shall ne'er be ready if it comes to courage.
My knees are giving way, I do believe!

MARY And mine! But with my petticoats I've shed
My natural alarms. I' faith, I feel
Already free—

LITTLE DOUGLAS Nay, Madame, feel it not
Too openly; that might betray us. Set
This jug upon your shoulder; it will shade

Your features! Mistress, this on yours— So, now—
[*Runs to window, hoots there*]
Come, come . . .

[*Exits.*

MARY Remember, Seton, what was said
By our deliverer! If it's done, 'twill be
By sheer audacity—

[*Starts after* SETON; *stops in terror, straightens up. Exits.*

CURTAIN

SECOND PERIOD

EPISODE FOUR

TIME:—*Eighteen years later.*

PLACE:—*Fotheringay.*

SCENE:—*A great bare chamber, black walls. These show dampness. Wide, massive doors up C. Up R., a cabinet. A chair, up L., on slightly raised dais. Sparse furnishings, otherwise, and gloomy air throughout.*

AT RISE:—SIR AMYAS PAWLET, *followed by* SIR DRURY, *enter.* DRURY *carries a leathern sack. Behind them,* SIR EDWARD MORTIMER, PAWLET, *and* DRURY *cross to cabinet, before which* PAWLET *sits;* MORTIMER *feigns a careless air, but sharply examines the room.*

MORTIMER So, Uncle, this is where the Queen is kept?

PAWLET Nay, Sir, there is but one Queen here in England.
The woman in my charge is Lady Stuart.

MORTIMER True, Uncle. Tell me, what she's pris'ner for?
For I admit that in my years abroad
I have forgot, if ever I have known it.

PAWLET [*Trying to open cabinet drawers*]
The charge is complicated. In beginning,
It had to do with my Lord Darnley's death.
He was a cousin to our own good Queen,
Whose duty 'twas to punish his foul murder;
So when, on invitation of Queen Bess,
My Lady Stuart rode into the kingdom,
Elizabeth refused to see her, till

She cleared herself of murder, which was charged
Against her by her own half-brother, then
The Regent. So, the Lady Stuart was
Detained, and brought to trial. But, so artful
Was she, no jot was found against her. Still,
It was thought best, until proof could be found
That she was innocent, to keep her in
Confinement. From which time she has done naught—
She, and misguided sympathizers—
But plot escape; sow discord; plan the vilest
Conspiracies! With Norfolk, who died for it,
Westmoreland and Northumberland—and dozens
You'll not remember, cozened by this papist.
Though prisoner, she sets the land on fire!

MORTIMER In Rheims, I met with Mistress Mary Seton,
Who served for many years your prisoner
And seldom spoke of her except with tears;
Especially, when talking of the escape
Of Lady Stuart from Lochleven, and
Young Douglas, and the Little Douglas, too,
Both slaughtered by Lord Murray's forces, following.
I've seen the Lady's portrait, oft, in France.

PAWLET I would that you had seen the Lady there!

MORTIMER It is a pity, Sir, for one of your
Ripe years to serve as goaler!

PAWLET 'Tis because
I am ripe, I am here! I'm past the season
When practised wiles can tempt a man to treason.
[*Finds papers, scoops them into sack.* DRURY *holding it*]
But here, I warrant you, there's plenty of it!
Go, Drury, take away this sack, and bring
Another. [DRURY *exits with sack.*

MORTIMER What a gruesome place it is here!

PAWLET Nay, Nephew, save your pity for a cause
That's worthy.

MORTIMER Pardon, Uncle. I am come
But lately from the Continent, and there
They speak of Lady Stuart as Queen, and Martyr!

PAWLET 'Tis what they call her there, and threat to do
In England, spreads alarm throughout the land.
If Lady Stuart is to be made martyr,
She'll owe it to the intrigues of the Guises.
Now, Nephew—let me counsel you—'twere better
You keep your pity for your rightful Queen.

MORTIMER I will! When may I see her?

PAWLET When I next
Report to Westminster, you shall with me.

[DRURY *re-enters, with empty sack. Behind him,* JANE KENNEDY, *with cloth in hand.*

KENNEDY [*Eyes* PAWLET, *ransacking the cabinet*]
Oh, Sir—must you intrude so soon again?
That cabinet holds all my lady's secrets!

PAWLET It is your Lady's secrets we are after!
The Secretary, Master Curle, on oath,
Has sworn your Lady Stuart is in league,
Despite our watchfulness, with vile assassins,
Who undertake to slay the Queen of England!

KENNEDY He would not dare accuse my Lady, were
He here, confronting her!

PAWLET No! he would turn
And flatter her; as all men do, who face her.

[MORTIMER, *with pretended disdain, exits.*

KENNEDY Alas, Sir Amyas, though you are her gaoler,
I know you for an honest gentleman.

Now, tell me—on your conscience—if there be
Not in the laws of England one that holds
That every plaintiff must confront the person
Whom he accuses, in the open Court?

PAWLET Yes, Mistress, there is such a law!

KENNEDY Then why
Has it been voided with my Lady Stuart?
'Tis said one, Babington, involved her in
A plot to kill the Queen; but where's the proof?
It was not verified. Now he is dead,
And gone, while she is still suspected. Sir,
I'd swear, as she has sworn, my Lady never
Saw hair or hide of Babington. If she
Is in the plot at all, it is as victim!

[PAWLET *gives directions to* DRURY, *who exits with second sack.* KENNEDY *passes cloth over walls*]

Sir Pawlet, there is damp upon these walls.
My Lady's suffering from it, painfully.
The more so, as it's got, now, to her bed.
Could you not add a cover to it?

PAWLET Her bed is her own making, Mistress.

KENNEDY Still,
It irks my heart to see a Lady born
To silks and velvets brought to this dire want —
Deprived of every comfort—airings—

PAWLET What
She brewed, she drinks. But I will make report
Of it at Westminster. What's there commanded,
I'll carry out, and nothing more.

KENNEDY Well, sir.

PAWLET Ha, Mistress, look at these! She's still conniving
With foreign priests and plotters!

KENNEDY Oh, Sir Amyas,
These Cardinals are kinsmen to my Lady.
Whom might she look to, tell her sorrow to
If not to them? 'Tis human nature, surely!

PAWLET What, Mistress! Are you fallen victim to
Her wiles? Will you be turning papist, next?

KENNEDY Sir Pawlet, I am of the Established Church,
And none can question me. But I have feelings.

PAWLET Then keep them for the service of your Queen.
'Twere better for you, Mistress. Ha! addressed—
Sealed—to the Queen, and this one to the Earl
Of Leicester.

KENNEDY Is it so? But, good Sir Pawlet,
Where is the crime to write to him who serves
The Queen of England as Lord Leicester does?

PAWLET My Lord was once a suitor to the Stuart.

KENNEDY 'Tis that, belike, which makes her turn to him
As friend in her adversity.

PAWLET Perhaps;
My Lord can steer a middle course when need be!
[*Tosses letter aside*]
Nor has he ceased to dream of winning crowns
Through one Queen, or the other.—Ah, a spring!
What's this? Her jewelry, with precious stones—
The fleur-de-lis of France?

KENNEDY Oh, do not take
Those, Sir! The scribbled verses, if you must;
My Lady has no entertainment here
Save writing out her heart, or 'broidering;
These are her resource; but the jewels—they
Are from her infant's christening, kept all

These years—her rings, once worn in France—I beg you
To leave them where you found them, Sir!

PAWLET Oh, no—
Such costly things as these may easily
Be made to purchase men—and weapons— Ha!
The Lady's coming, crucifix in hand,
But in her heart, I'll warrant, pride, and lust!

[MARY *enters, carrying her Book of Hours, and crucifix.*

MARY Sir Pawlet—here?

KENNEDY Alas, my Lady, all
Is taken this time—letters—jewelry—

MARY Well, Jane, I can support this, too. I'm used
To changes since I came to England. But,
Sir Amyas, you have ta'en by force what I
Designed to have delivered to you. 'Mongst
The papers is a letter to the Queen,
Your Royal Mistress. Pledge me, Sir, that you
Will place it in her Majesty's own hand.
I would not have it trusted to Lord Burleigh.

PAWLET I'll think about it. I will do what's best.

MARY Sir, you may know its import. I am seeking
An audience with the Queen; for, though I came
To England on her promise to receive me—
Now, eighteen years ago, today sees us
Still unacquainted with each other. But
Being sore beset—for, as you know, I have
Been called before a court of gentlemen—
I never can acknowledge them my peers—

PAWLET No? You have often trusted fate and honour
To men less worthy of esteem.

MARY Perhaps—
But still, her Majesty is of my kindred.
Wait, Sir. It is a month of dread suspense
Since the Commissioners surprised me here
And with unseemly haste forced me, though stunned
And unprepared, with none to counsel me,
To answer, from my memory, their charges.
Sir, I am anxious! Let me know the worst!
What have I still to hope, or fear?

PAWLET [*After a moment*]
'Twere best
To close your accounts with Heaven.

MARY Nay—from Heav'n
I'm sure of mercy—but from earthly judges?

PAWLET Depend upon it, justice will be done you.

MARY My trial, then, is over?

PAWLET I am not
At liberty to say.

MARY Am I condemned?

PAWLET I cannot tell you.

MARY Is the murd'rer, then,
To come upon me suddenly, as did
My Judges?

PAWLET Hold to that thought, Madame; so
He'll find you more prepared than they found you!

[*Enter,* MORTIMER. *He pushes rudely past* MARY.

MORTIMER My Lord is asking for you, Uncle.

[*Exits as he entered.*

MARY [*To* PAWLET]
Sir
I venerate your years; but young men's impudence—

I beg of you to spare me in the future,
Your nephew's presence.

PAWLET 'Tis his impudence
Commends him, Madame. He'll not melt before
A treacherous woman's wiles. I'll answer for him!
You'll only waste your subtlety on him.

[*Exits.*

KENNEDY Dear Lady! It is hard to listen to
Such language!

[MORTIMER *re-enters hurriedly.*

MORTIMER [*To* KENNEDY]
Mistress, guard the door. I have
Important matters with the Queen.

[KENNEDY, *loth to go, exits.*

MARY, *astonished, gazes, half fearfully, at* MORTIMER. *He hurries to her, places a letter in her hand*]

My Liege—
Fear nothing; only read this letter.

MARY From
The Cardinal! "Confide in him who brings
This to you, Edward Mortimer. You have
No truer, better friend in England." You,
Sir? Can I really trust you whom I took
For a harsh enemy? You, who are nephew
To a hard gaoler—

MORTIMER Madame, any moment
Lord Burleigh may be here. He's with my uncle.
I must content myself with saying now,
That I have spent some years in study, with
The Cardinal, at Rheims. I have been chosen,
And friends concur with me, to rescue you.

MARY Ah, God!

MORTIMER Have courage, Madame, and my Liege—
Ah, if the Britons might now but behold
Their captive Queen, how England's youth would rise
In general mutiny, and not a sword
In all the Island sleep within its sheath
Until your Majesty were free again!

MARY 'Twere well with Mary Stuart, if every Briton
Looked on her with your eyes.

MORTIMER I have been schooled,
And thoroughly, to know the fearful wrongs
That have been done you; ay, and this last one,
Of which the dreadful news is just made known.

MARY Is it my sentence? Has it been pronounced?
The verdict?

MORTIMER Two-and-forty Judges have
Declared you guilty of attempt upon
The Tudor's life.

MARY [*After a moment*]
Sir, I am not surprised.
It is a subterfuge. I know their aim.
They seek some ground on which to hold me, yes,
As helpless prisoner, forever, here!

MORTIMER Alas, your Majesty, they do not stop there!
You are entangled in a terrible web;
Only your death can make the crown sit steady
Upon Elizabeth's head. That upstart Queen
Means you shall perish on the scaffold!

MARY Sir,
It is the honest care of a true heart
Which conjures up such empty apprehensions.
I do not fear the scaffold. What I fear,
Is that the Queen would set my claims at rest
By other means, less open. I confess

I never raise a goblet to my lips
Without the inward fear the draught that's in it
Is mingled by my Royal Sister's love.

MORTIMER Dear Lady, fear no more. All is prepared.
I have twelve English noblemen, all pledged
To free you from captivity—

MARY Too few!
All England guards the gates of Fotheringay.
Only the Queen may open them.

MORTIMER She will not!

MARY Or—there's one other.

MORTIMER Who? Who is it? Tell me!

MARY Lord Leicester—

MORTIMER Leicester, Madame? He's your foe?
The fav'rite of Elizabeth!

MARY [*Smiles, ever so faintly*]
He plays so.
Ah, Sir, if I am saved at all, 'twill be
Through him. Go, find him. Give him this—
[*Takes a letter, and miniature from her bosom, wraps them; gives them to* MORTIMER]
Confide
Your plans to him. He'll aid you. This contains
My likeness, and a letter!

MORTIMER Oh, my Liege,
Explain this mystery!

MARY Confide in Leicester;
He will confide in you—
[KENNEDY *enters, hurrying.*

KENNEDY Be on your guard!
Lord Burleigh's coming, Madame!

MARY [*To* MORTIMER]
Go, Sir, go!

[MORTIMER *exits, barely escaping before* BURLEIGH and PAWLET *enter.*

BURLEIGH I come deputed from the Court of Justice.
MARY Lord Burleigh lends that Court a willing tongue
Which was already guided by his spirit.
BURLEIGH You speak as if you knew the verdict, Madame!
MARY Lord Burleigh brings it; hence I know it. But,
Let's to the matter, Sir.
BURLEIGH You have acknowledged
The jurisdiction of the two-and-forty—
MARY My Lord, excuse me, if at the beginning
I am obliged to interrupt you. No!
I never have acknowledged it, my Lord!
How could I do so? Give away my own
Prerogatives? the entrusted rights of my
Own people? the inheritance, as well,
Of my own son, and every monarch's honour?
It is enacted in the English laws
That everyone who stands accused of crime
Shall plead before a jury of his equals.
Who, in this High Commission, is my equal?
Kings are my only peers, my Lord of Burleigh!
BURLEIGH That is a point of mere formality.
It cannot change the course of justice.
You breathe the air of England; you enjoy
The law's protection, and its benefits;
Thus, you become its subject.
MARY No, I breathe
The air of prison walls. Is that to live
In England? For your laws, have I giv'n pledge
To keep them? I'm no member of your realm!
I am an independent, foreign Queen,
And owe no prince more than he owes to me!

BURLEIGH Well, Madame, do you think the name of Queen
Can serve as charter to foment discord?
Where would the State's security be found
If Justice could not smite the guilty brow
Of stranger King as freely as a beggar's?

MARY I do not claim to be exempt from judgment;
I only take exception to my Judges.

BURLEIGH But are they not the foremost of the kingdom?
Too independent to be else than honest?
Is not the Reverend Primate at their head?
The learned Talbot, keeper of the Seals?
And Howard, Lord High Admiral of our Fleets?
How could our matchless Sovereign do more
Than out of all the monarchy select
The noblest and appoint them Judges in
Your suit? Why, Madame, were it probable
That party hatred might corrupt one heart,
Would forty chosen men unite in passing
A sentence uttered like a word of passion?

MARY Yes, truly, were these lords as you describe them,
I must be silent; but these names, which you
Are pleased to praise, I see performing, in
The history of England, different parts.
I see your noble, reverend House of Lords,
Venal alike with the corrupted Commons,
Make statutes, and annul them; ratify
A marriage; then dissolve it, in obedience
To Power's voice. Today it brands the King's
Own daughters "Bastards"; yet, tomorrow, turns,
Crowns them as Queens, and sets them on the throne.
I see them, in four reigns, with pliant conscience
Four times abjure their faith; renounce the Pope
With Henry, yet retain the old belief;
Reform again, with Edward; hear the Mass

Once more with Mary; with Elizabeth,
Who governs now, turn from the Mass again.

3URLEIGH You've said you are not versed in England's laws;
You are, at least, well read in her misfortunes.

MARY My Lord, I do not doubt that you are honest,
And have the good of England much at heart;
Nor that, besides yourself, there are among
My Judges many upright men. But they
Are of another country, different faith;
Besides, they're eager to take judgment on
The Queen of Scotland. Sir, 'tis an old saying
That Scots and English ever are unjust
Towards one another; but this living hatred
Will never be extinguished till at last
One Parliament, in concord, shall unite them,
One common sceptre rule throughout the Island!

3URLEIGH Could England hope for that good fortune from
A Stuart?

MARY Why not?

3URLEIGH I've not come to argue;
Rather, to read the Law.
[*Reads, from a document*]
"Thus, if a plot
Shall rise henceforth in England, in the name,
Or for the benefit, of any claimant
To England's crown, it is decreed that justice
Shall straight be done on such pretender, and
The party, if found guilty by the Court,
Shall suffer death."

MARY This law was made—when, Sir?

BURLEIGH A year ago!

MARY To be applied to me?
That Statute is the late and deadliest bloom
Of subtly nurtured hatred of myself.

'Twas made to blind the people, as the name
Of Law will blind them, to the crime you'd do!
The charge of Babington, on which you base
Your charges against me, is doubly false!
I do most strenuously deny it!

BURLEIGH You
Have been in correspondence with Mendoza,
The Ambassador of Spain.

MARY Come to the point,
My Lord.

BURLEIGH It has been proved that you have roused
The Kings of Europe to a war with England.

MARY I should but exercise a sacred right
If I stirred every State in Europe, Sir,
To fly to arms and save me from injustice.
Ah, 'twixt myself and England, 'tis not question
Of justice, but of violence, and vengeance!

BURLEIGH [*Puts papers together*]
I would not talk so, Madame; for the right
Of Power is seldom on the prisoner's side.

MARY Quite true, my Lord. I am the weak one here;
Elizabeth, the strong one. Let her, if
She will, destroy me; but, my Lord, it is
The resource of an evil cause, to seal
The lips of an opponent. Let your Queen
Beware, lest, making me a martyr to
Her passions, she herself become a thing
Of vile contumely!

BURLEIGH I'll tell the Queen;
[*Exits, somewhat hastily,* PAWLET *after him.*

MARY [*Collapsing, violent tears, in* KENNEDY'S *arms*]
Oh, Kennedy! Her hatred is relentless!

CURTAIN

EPISODE FIVE

SCENE:—*Hall at Westminster. Throne set diagonally up R. Approached by three steps. Table down L. Entrance, wide centre door. Also, down L., to* QUEEN'S *chamber.*

DISCOVERED:—ELIZABETH, *on throne. Before her, two* SCOTCH AMBASSADORS. *Near door, two* FRENCH AMBASSADORS; *L.,* LEICESTER, *and* TALBOT, *in serious discourse. Opposite, a group of foreign* AMBASSADORS.

AT RISE:—*A paper is handed to* FRENCH AMBASSADORS, *who exit, C., indignantly.* ELIZABETH *addresses* SCOTCH AMBASSADORS.

ELIZABETH My Lords Ambassadors from Scotland, you
Choose an ill time to plead for clemency.
We've been obliged to hand their passports to
The French Ambassadors, who, on the same
Sad errand, have besieged us, here, for weeks,
Themselves conspiring against our throne.

MELVIL But, Madame, if that accusation's founded,
Your Majesty will surely not place blame
Upon a helpless prisoner, for deeds
Committed by hot-headed sympathizers.

ELIZABETH Her sympathizers wax too numerous, Melvil.
It is their number, constantly increasing,
That prove our life is hourly endangered
While this arch-enemy still works her plots.

MELVIL Your Majesty, the King of Scotland and
His Ministers have authorized us, in

Their names, to pledge that Mary Stuart shall
Renounce all claims to England's throne and crown
In favour of her son—

ELIZABETH What, Melvil! Would
You have us twofold arm our enemy
Where he now holds a single weapon 'gainst us?

MELVIL Pray does your Majesty regard the King,
My youthful master, as an enemy?

ELIZABETH Nay, nay! He is our good and trusty friend.
'Twas a mere slip of tongue. Go, gentlemen;
Seek new means of adjustment. On our side
We'll do our best to arrive at what is fair.

[MELVIL *and his companions rise, bowing, backwards, from the room, through door C. They pass* BURLEIGH, *who enters, hurrying forward to* ELIZABETH]

Good morrow, my Lord Burleigh. What is new?

BURLEIGH Illustrious Sovereign! There remains but one
Cloud, now, to darken over England. Once,
Your Majesty, the Lady Stuart is
Despatched, peace is assured throughout the land.
The judgment being rendered, it is wisdom
Swiftly to execute it.

ELIZABETH Good my Lord—
This name of "wisdom"—ah, how hateful 'tis
When it calls out for blood! Yes, verily!
My soul loathes, hates the very sound of "wisdom"!—
My Lord of Shrewsbury!

[TALBOT *comes forward,* LEICESTER *draws nearer*]

Come! We'd have your counsel
Upon this Stuart matter which so threatens
The peace of England and the throne itself.
What's your opinion of it?

TALBOT Madame, it
Were well some other means were found than death.
Though sentence has been passed, it seems not just.

ELIZABETH Ah? Is the learned Talbot advocate
For our and England's enemy?

TALBOT Your Majesty,
I would not take the part of her mis-actions;
But, carried in her infancy to France,
Where, in a round of constant dissipation,
She was deluded by the glare of vice—
Nay, carried onward, by the stream, to ruin,
She has been like a straw upon the water!
Hers was the vain possession of a beauty
And birth exceeding others of her sex—

ELIZABETH My Lord of Shrewsbury, collect yourself!
Her charms must be beyond comparison
When they engender in an elder's blood
Such fire! My Lord of Leicester, you are silent.
The name that makes him eloquent deprives
You of your speech?

[PAWLET *and* MORTIMER *enter, up C.*

LEICESTER Your Majesty, I gave
My verdict for her death; but here, in Council,
I may, consistently, speak otherwise.
I question now, since France is silenced, Scotland
Unable to protest or rescue her,
If this be time—or if 'tis necessary
To carry out the sentence. I would counsel
Suspension of it, leaving it in force.
Let her live on, but with the axe suspended
Above her head, as warning that upon
The raising of an arm on her behalf
The blade will drop.

ELIZABETH My Lords, I thank you, all.
I'll weigh your arguments, with God's assistance
Decide.—Sir Amyas Pawlet!
[PAWLET *comes forward, kneels*]
What is new?

PAWLET Your Majesty, Sir Edward Mortimer,
My nephew, who's returned from foreign travel,
Begs leave to offer homage to his Queen.

MORTIMER [*Comes forward, kneels*]
Long live her Majesty!

ELIZABETH Arise, Sir Knight!
So you have been in France? And Rome? Come tell me
What plots our enemies are hatching!

MORTIMER God
Confound them! May the bolts now aimed against
England's true Queen recoil upon themselves.

ELIZABETH Yet I have heard that you frequented, Sir,
The schools at Rheims, and have abjured your faith?

MORTIMER I did, my Liege, pretend so; but it was
To serve my Royal Mistress.
[ELIZABETH *addresses* PAWLET, *but studies* MORTIMER.

ELIZABETH You've a paper?

PAWLET 'Tis a petition from my Lady Stuart.

BURLEIGH [*Reaches for it*]
I'll take it, Sir. A faithful subject should
Protect his Sovereign from vain complaint.

PAWLET [*Gives letter to* ELIZABETH, *who opens it, reads. To* BURLEIGH]
'Tis no complaint. It is a boon she asks.
She would have audience with the Queen.

BURLEIGH She cannot.

PAWLET Sir, if the Queen be gracious, are you man
To hinder pity?

BURLEIGH She is condemned to death.
If now the Queen should give her audience here,
It is equivalent to pardon.

ELIZABETH [*Applies handkerchief to her eyes*]
Ah,
To what extremities is she reduced
Whose proud beginnings were so glorious!

TALBOT My Liege, your heart is pitiful. Be kind
To this most abject princess.

BURLEIGH Majesty,
While pity is praiseworthy, let it not
Mislead you.

LEICESTER Nay, my Lords, the Queen is wise.
She does not need our counsel.

ELIZABETH [*Drying her eyes*]
We must try
To find a means of reconciling pity
With what necessity imposes on us!
Retire, my Lords!—Sir Edward Mortimer!

[MORTIMER *approaches. The Lords bow themselves out, C.* LEICESTER *exits down L.* PAWLET *watches, as he, too, withdraws, puzzled.*

MORTIMER My Liege—

ELIZABETH Sir, you have been abroad—frequented
The company of England's enemies.
You know our crown can never be secure
While she who fans that bigot zeal, and fires
Their hopes, still lives.

MORTIMER She lives, your Majesty,
Only so long as you command it.

ELIZABETH True—
The sentence waits our Royal signature.
But that, affixed, makes us responsible.
A most unpleasant thought. No, no! The deed
Must be so done that our participation
In her removal be, at least, left doubtful.
There must be other means for't?

MORTIMER Surely, Madame.

ELIZABETH Sir, you have somewhat more of spirit than
Your uncle.

MORTIMER Has your Majesty explained
Your wishes to him?

ELIZABETH Not—successfully.

MORTIMER Age makes him scrupulous, perhaps.

ELIZABETH But you
Have youth and courage?

MORTIMER Both, your Majesty.

ELIZABETH [*Comes from throne seat, to him, softly*]
Sir Edward, if some morning you might wake
Me with this news, "Your lifelong enemy,
The Lady Stuart, is no more," that day
Would see the dawn of much preferment.

MORTIMER Madame,
Depend on me!

ELIZABETH God speed you, Sir.
[*Exits in room, L.*

PAWLET [*Enter, from up C. He eyes* MORTIMER]
What said
The Queen to you?

MORTIMER Nay, naught of consequence.

PAWLET Ah, Mortimer. Youth far too easily
Is baited with preferment. Let none tempt you
To stain your conscience.

MORTIMER What, Sir, do you mean?

TALBOT Away with pretence. I know what the Queen
Desires of you. She hopes your youth will prove
More pliant than my age.

MORTIMER Sir—

PAWLET Have you promised?
For, if you have, my curse on you—

[*Enter, from L.,* LEICESTER.

LEICESTER Ah, Pawlet!
The Queen is much possessed in favour of
Your nephew. She confides the Scottish pris'ner
Hereafter to your mutual care, relying
On his fidelity.

PAWLET So? She relies
On him? Sir, I'll rely upon myself
And on my two good eyes.

[*Exits, C., in dudgeon.*

LEICESTER The Knight seems angered?

MORTIMER 'Tis at the confidence the Queen reposes
In one who is so recent come to Court.

LEICESTER You wished to speak to me, in private?

MORTIMER Yes!
First, some assurance that I may, with safety.

LEICESTER And what assurance on your side, who show
Two different aspects here? Which is the real one?
Come! Lead the way to confidence, I'll follow.

[MORTIMER *gives* LEICESTER MARY'S *package.*
He opens it.

MORTIMER I bear a letter from the Queen of Scotland.

LEICESTER Her likeness!

[*Kisses miniature; reads letter eagerly*]

MORTIMER Now, Sir, I can trust you!

LEICESTER The
Contents of this are known to you?

MORTIMER No, Sir.
The Queen said you'd explain the riddle to me.
For 'tis a riddle that the Earl of Leicester,
The far-famed favourite of Elizabeth,
Should be the man from whom the Queen of Scotland
Expects deliverance.

LEICESTER How comes it, Sir,
That you take such an int'rest in her fate?
What was it gained her confidence?

MORTIMER My Lord,
I speak unveiledly. I have abjured
The English creed and stand in correspondence
With Rheims. A letter from the Cardinal
Was my credential to the Queen.

LEICESTER I see.
I have had news of your conversion. Well, Sir,
You seem surprised my heart is turned towards
The Royal captive. I have never been
Indifferent to her. Her beauty was
Impressed upon my heart long years ago.
I've had a hope, which through a faithful hand
I have conveyed to her, that I might yet
Deliver her; and in this letter she
Makes proffer of her hand, share in her crown,
If I will rescue her.

MORTIMER Yet you, my Lord,
Have let her be condemned with scarce a protest.

LEICESTER You do not think that I would, patiently,
Have seen her led to death? I hope to ward
Off all extremes, until I find a means
That's certain.

MORTIMER Sir, I have the means to save her;
Reliable confederates; and all
Is ready.

LEICESTER Your confederates—are they
In Mary's confidence, concerning me?

MORTIMER My Lord—

LEICESTER This is a dangerous enterprise,
And things may change. My Lady Stuart has
Requested audience with the Queen. I can,
I think, arrange it with some tact. I hope so.
An audience that shall seem like mere chance—
A something accidental. Yes, I can
Arrange it; for the Queen—this, Sir, in private—
Has a true woman's curiosity
To look upon and gauge the far-famed beauty
Of Lady Stuart. I'll indulge her—I'll
Arrange it, Sir.—Wait—

[*Up to C., suddenly, opens door there*]

Ah, my enemy,
And Lady Stuart's. Come! We'll find a place
More covered.

[*Takes* MORTIMER'S *arm and goes toward exit, R.*

CURTAIN

EPISODE SIX

SCENE:—*A space in the woods; at Fotheringay.*
AT RISE:—*Enter, almost on a run,* MARY, *followed by* KENNEDY. MARY *gazes about her in a kind of delirious happiness.*

KENNEDY Wait, Lady Stuart! Wait! You fly this way
And that, like one on wings. I cannot keep
Up with you!

MARY Oh, I'm childish, Kennedy!
Come! Be a child with me! For three long years
I have not seen green fields, save through the bars
That guard my prison. Ah—the last time I
Was giv'n an airing, 'twas on horseback; but,
So fearful were they I would make escape,
My horses' legs were hobbled. But, no matter.
For one brief moment free—the walls of my
Dark chamber, yonder, left behind me, I
Would drink deep draughts of this most heavenly air!
[*She moves, arms outstretched, to receive it.*

KENNEDY Oh, Lady, you're not free! 'Tis only that
The trees cut off the Castle from your view!

MARY I thank you, friendly trees, for flattering thus
My sweet illusion! I'm so happy now
It is a pain! I dream that I am free!
The blue of heav'n that circles overhead
Gives me a wide, unfettered glimpse of space—
Oh, vast, immeasurable sea of Space!
Look at those clouds that, steering southward, fly

Towards France where all who love me are—the dead,
The living—

KENNEDY Lady—

MARY Oh, that I might sail
Away on them, all tranquilly, to greet
The dear land of my youth!—See, Kennedy,
There is a fisherman, returning home.
Could he but throw his net to a poor Queen
And draw her hence, he'd have a draught such as
Ne'er yet had fallen to him; a rich draught—

KENNEDY Nay, Madame, have a care! Do not indulge
In such wild wishes. Spies are all about us.

MARY No, Jane, you are mistaken. This small favour
Is harbinger of greater happiness,
And I know whence it comes. It is from Leicester.

KENNEDY I cannot fathom their strange contradictions!
But yesterday your death was talked of; all
At once, today, you have this liberty—

MARY Hark! There's a bugle! There's a hunting party
About here, somewhere. Oh—what memories
That bugle wakes in me!

[*Enter,* PAWLET]

Sir Pawlet, thank you!
This freedom comes, I know, as consequence
Of the request made in my letter.

PAWLET I
Delivered it. You may prepare for still
A greater privilege.

MARY You startle me!
Proceed!

PAWLET The Queen is nearby. She is hunting.
Now, shortly, you're to see her—face to face.

[MARY *recoils, almost fainting.*

KENNEDY [*Supporting her*]
My Lady—

PAWLET Is't not well? It was your prayer!
Come, Madame, you had ever ready tongue.
This is the time to use it! Now, or never!

MARY But I—am not prepared—not now! Oh, Jane,
Let us go back, till I collect myself.

PAWLET No, Madame; wait here for her Majesty.
You well may be alarmed to stand before
Your Judge.

MARY Far other thoughts disturb me, Sir.
[SHREWSBURY *enters. She hurries to him*]
Lord Shrewsbury! You're a very angel sent
From heav'n! I cannot, will not see the Queen.
Oh, save me! Save me!

TALBOT Come, your Majesty!
This is the weightiest moment of your fate!

MARY I know it! And for years I have prepared
To meet it; written down, weighed, studied all
That I would say; have learned by heart that which
Might touch and move her to compassion. Now,
Fierce, burning memories of wrongs consume
All I have meant to say to her—

TALBOT Come, Madame;
She holds the power, now; therefore, be humble!

MARY I, humble? I, to her? No, never, Sir!

TALBOT 'Tis not the season to insist on rights.

MARY My prayer is heard. Alas, the answer comes
In guise of curse to me! I never should
Have prayed for it! 'Twere better we should never
Look on each other. I have been too hurt—
Too grievous hurt; and she too grievously
Has hurt me!

TALBOT Madame; place more confidence
In her. She's not unfeeling. Did not I
Stand by while she was reading your request?
Did I not see her tears with my own eyes?
This is my reason for entreating you;
For coming in advance.

MARY Ah, Talbot, you
Have always been my friend. But others have
So terribly misused me!

TALBOT Nay, forget it!
Receive her with submissiveness.

MARY Is Burleigh
My evil genius with her?

TALBOT None attends
Except Lord Leicester.

MARY [*Starts*]
Leicester's with her?

TALBOT Have
No fear of him; the bringing of the Queen
To Fotheringay was his work.

MARY [*To* KENNEDY]
Was I right?

TALBOT Go now, apart, a step or two; for she
Is coming.

[*Enter* ELIZABETH, *with* LEICESTER. *Courtiers and ladies behind her.* ELIZABETH *talks, to* LEICESTER, *in deliberately selected tone and words as they enter.*

ELIZABETH 'Twere best send back our retinue to London.

[LEICESTER *dismisses courtiers*]
The sight of them, and us, rouses our people
To quite idolatrous joy!

MARY Oh, God! There is
No sign of pity in that hard, cold face!

ELIZABETH [*Fixes her eyes upon* MARY]
What lady, Sir, is this?

LEICESTER Your Majesty,
These are the woods of Fotheringay.

ELIZABETH [*Feigning surprise, reproof*]
My Lord
Of Leicester, who has done this?

LEICESTER Dear my Liege,
Not I, but Heav'n has led you here! But, now—
Oh, be magnanimous, your Majesty;
Let pity have its full sway in your heart!

TALBOT Your Majesty, be merciful! Look on
This most unfortunate of women, who,
Dissolved in anguish, faints before you.
[MARY, *clinging to* KENNEDY, *advances a few steps, but halts, shuddering.*

ELIZABETH Nay,
My Lords, which of you was it who described
To me a pris'ner bowed by sorrow? Here's
A haughty woman, who's by no means humbled
By her calamities.
[*The anxious Lords try to calm her.*

MARY [*To* KENNEDY, *who is urging her to speak*]
I will submit,
Forget my dignity, my sufferings;
Kneel at her feet who's cause of all my sorrows.
[*Turns, takes step towards* ELIZABETH]
Ah, Madame, it is clear that Heaven has lent
Approval to you. You are triumph-crowned.
God's power has raised you, and I bless Him for it.

Now, in your turn, be gracious to a sister
Who calls to you from depths of her distresses.

ELIZABETH This attitude becomes you, Lady Stuart.
I praise my God, who has not suffered me
To kneel at your feet, as you kneel at mine.

MARY Vicissitude waits on men equally.
Do not, before the eyes of others, dishonour
Yourself by so dishonouring me. Do not
Disgrace the royal blood of Tudor. In
My veins a stream as noble courses. Oh,
For God's sake, pity! Do not stand apart
So inaccessible, when I, to touch
Your heart, lay mine so widely open to you.

ELIZABETH You wished to speak to me, and I, the Queen
Of England, putting by the wrongs I have
Endured from you, now grant the boon you asked.
Well, Lady Stuart, what have you to say?
You're here, now, in the Royal presence. Speak!

MARY Ah, how shall I begin! How may I so
Arrange my words that they may reach, yet not
Offend your heart? God give me strength that I
Wound not; and yet, how may my cause be pleaded,
Without impeaching you? I wish 'twere not so!
Like you, I am a Queen, yet you have held me
Full eighteen years confined in prison, though
I came as suppliant to you, who offered
Me hospitality, protection. True,
I've been protected—by stone walls; but I
Have seen all friends torn from me; I have been
Exposed to cruel insults, cruel want;
Last, hurried to the bar of a disgraceful
And insolent tribunal! But, I'll think

On these no more; I'll bury all I've suffered.
I'll blame it all on Fate—

ELIZABETH No, on your own
Deceitful heart the blame lies. 'Twas the wild
Ambitions of your people. No ill will
As yet had passed between us when your uncle,
Imperious, proud priest, whose shameless hand
Would grasp all crowns, attacked me; led you on,
To lay claim to my true and loyal kingdom!
What arms did he not use against my throne?
But, you say rightly, God is with me! And,
That haughty Cardinal was cut off in
The combat, forced to yield it! He aimed blows
At my head, but 'tis yours which falls.

MARY Mayhap.
Still, I am in God's hands. You never can
Employ the power He gives so cruelly.

ELIZABETH What's to prevent me? 'Twas your uncle set
Example to the Kings of Europe how
Best to conclude a peace with those they hated.
I have his lesson of Bartholomew!
I practise only what your priests have taught.
My surety lies in force. No compact can
Be made with vipers; no peace be patched up
That will endure!

MARY Nay, this is but suspicion—
A dark, a wrong suspicion. You have, from
The first, met me as enemy. Had you
But named me heir to your dominions, as
My right is—

ELIZABETH Name you heir, that while I live
You might allure—seduce my people?

MARY Sister—

I yield all claim to these domains. My wings
Are lamed. I am no more enticed by greatness.
You've won your point. I am but my own shadow.
My long captivity, at last, has broken
My spirit. Now my bloom is gone. Your work
Is done. But you are not come here to mock
A victim. You will surely hear me. Madame,
Pronounce the word. Say: "Mary, you are free!
You've felt my power, now learn to honour, as well,
My generosity." Say this, and I
Will take up life again, as gift, so hold it
From you. One word will wash out all the past!
Oh, Madame! Speak it!—

ELIZABETH You, at last, confess
You're conquered? All your schemes, then, have run out?
No more leagues with adventurers to free you?
No more seductions practised on your gaolers?
So these, my Lord of Leicester, are the charms
Which no man with impunity could look on?
With whom no woman could hold comparison?
I' sooth, her honours have been cheaply gained!
She, who was common to all men, with ease
Became the common object of approval!

MARY Oh—this is too much!

ELIZABETH Now, you show us your
True face, which you've been masking!

MARY I have never
Denied, or sought to hide my weaknesses,
The faults of youth; the worst of me is known!
But some will tell you, I am better than
The fame I bear; and woe to you when, in

The time to come, a world shall tear away
The veil of arch-hypocrisy that hides
Your secret lusts. Virtue was not your birthright!
It is well known what brought your mother's head,
The head of Anne Bullen, to the block!

[TALBOT, *forward, parts the angry Queens.*

TALBOT [*To* MARY]
Is this the moderation, the submission,
You promised?

MARY Moderation! I've endured
All human nature can endure. No more
Sheep-hearted resignation, passive patience!
Oh, could my tongue but fling out darts, steeped, poisoned,
With my long pent-up, bitter rancour!

TALBOT Oh,
My Liege, forgive her!

LEICESTER Come, your Majesty!

MARY [*Shakes* KENNEDY'S *arm off. Advances towards* ELIZABETH]
A Bastard soils the English throne, profanes it!
The proud and gen'rous Britons are befooled
By a mean trickster, whose whole soul is false
And painted, like her face! If right prevailed
You'd be here, in the dust, kneeling to me,
Who am your rightful sovereign!

[ELIZABETH *shrinks before her; turns, exits hastily. The Lords, in consternation, follow.*

KENNEDY [*Wrings her hands*]
God! My Lady!
Oh, my poor Lady! Now, what have you done?

MARY What have I done? I've thrown the weight of mountains
From my o'erburdened heart! I've plunged live steel
In my oppressor's breast, where, I know well,
She harbours death for me! Ah, Jane! At last!
After these years of sorrow, this abasement,
I've had one great, victorious revenge!

CURTAIN

EPISODE SEVEN

SCENE:—*Before a Curtain.*

AT RISE:—*A Guard crosses from L. to R. Enter, L., in great anxiety,* MORTIMER. *Arriving C., he looks after Guard, then turns, meeting* LEICESTER, *who enters L.* LEICESTER *is absorbed.*

MORTIMER My Lord—

LEICESTER [*Scarcely recognizes him*]
Well, Sir?

MORTIMER Your ear, my Lord.

LEICESTER What, now?
Why do you dog me?

MORTIMER I have come to warn you.
At Fotheringay—

LEICESTER Damn Fotheringay! To think
Of all the pains I took to lure the Queen there,
And then the bitter turn that ended all!
I am undone! The Queen already blames
My counsel for her sad experience. Go!

MORTIMER Alas, my Lord, if that were all! Lord Burleigh
Has got possession of the letter which
The Queen addressed to you, my Lord, in which
She faithfully renews the promises
First made to you, and mentions quite unveiled,
My embassy which bore her picture to you.

LEICESTER God's death! And hell! Then I am ruined.

MORTIMER Sir,
I bring you instant word that you may be

Beforehand with Lord Burleigh. Save yourself
And her. An oath will clear you. You have but
To find some pretext. You are bold, my Lord,
And fertile in invention—

[LEICESTER *paces about; then stops sharply.*

LEICESTER True! True! Ho,
Ho, Guards! Come here, Guards!

[*Guards appear, extreme R.*]

Seize this traitor! Keep
Him closely while I find her Majesty.
He has confessed a hideous plot to me!

[*Exits L., leaving* MORTIMER *dumbfounded.*

MORTIMER Good God! He'd build a bridge upon my ruin!
Oh, curses on you, Leicester, who betray
Your faith, and Mary, my beloved Queen!

[*Plunges a knife into his breast, and falls, as Guards rush to him.*

LIGHTS OUT

LIGHTS UP ON

SCENE:—*As in Episode Five.*
DISCOVERED:—*At table, letter in hand,* ELIZABETH. *Near her,* LORD BURLEIGH. ELIZABETH *is reading, and is agitated.*

BURLEIGH Your Majesty, does not that letter plain
Convict him?

ELIZABETH Oh, the traitor! Yet, my Lord,
Suppose—it is quite possible the screed
Is a foul trap set by that cunning harlot
To ruin him in our regard?

BURLEIGH My Liege—

ELIZABETH Be it as may, 'twas Leicester lured me there
Into the presence of his paramour;

And he shall pay for it. Go! Give my orders
He's not to be admitted, should he come.

[BURLEIGH *turns towards door, C., which opens suddenly.* LEICESTER *almost bursts into the room.*

BURLEIGH My Lord—you, Sir, intrude without permission?

LEICESTER "Permission?" Who stands high enough at Court
As to permit my coming or forbid it?
Your Majesty has giv'n a willing ear
To him. I ask the like.

BURLEIGH 'Tis useless, Sir!
We've here the letter that condemns you!

LEICESTER Letter?

ELIZABETH Do you deny it? Or that you received
Her likeness? That you've given her hope that you
Would free her?

LEICESTER I confess, my Liege, and freely.

ELIZABETH You traitor! This shall end, Sir, in the Tower.

LEICESTER 'Twas wrong to make a secret of my work.
I own, I have had correspondence with
The Lady Stuart; but 'twas as a means
Of searching out her plots. A dangerous game—
No one but Leicester in your Court were bold
Enough to play it.

BURLEIGH If your thought was loyal
Why should you have concealed it?

LEICESTER Your way, Sir,
Is always to prate much before you act.
My manner is to act, and then to speak!
In spite of all your watchfulness, the Stuart
Were free today had I not hindered it.
Her Majesty confided in young Mortimer;
Went farther, gave a secret charge to him—

My Liege's tender heart might well deceive her;
But where, my Lord, were your ten thousand eyes
Not to discover Mortimer was false?
That he, the Guise's tool, and Mary's creature,
Came here to free the Stuart and to murder
The Queen of England!

ELIZABETH What? Young Mortimer?

LEICESTER This very night she was to have been freed.
But he disclosed the plan to me. I took
Him pris'ner. In despair, he slew himself.

BURLEIGH Or did you slay him?

LEICESTER What a vile suspicion!

[*Up C., throws open the door, and calls into corridor*]

Ho, Guard!

[*Guard appears in door, C.*]

Relate how Mortimer expired.

GUARD I was on duty on the Palace porch,
When suddenly my Lord of Leicester called
And ordered me to take a knight in charge,
Denouncing him as traitor. Upon this,
Before the guards could hinder his intent,
The knight pulled out a dagger, plunged it in
His heart. He fell—

LEICESTER Enough! You may withdraw;
Her Majesty is satisfied.

[*Guard exits.* ELIZABETH *sinks into chair beside table.*

ELIZABETH How I'm
Surrounded by vile treachery! Good God!
I know not where I stand, or what to think!
A curse on her who brings me all this anguish!

LEICESTER I take back all my protests; she must die.
I would advise your Majesty to have
The writ that fixes execution drawn
At once!

BURLEIGH And I; and since his Lordship shows
Such zeal, were it not well that he be named
To see the sentence is true executed?

ELIZABETH My Lord advises well. I'll think it over.

LEICESTER In every sense that suits a Burleigh; but
My rank should free me from a like commission.

ELIZABETH Lord Burleigh may partake the honour with you.
[*To* BURLEIGH]
My Lord, will you call Davison; command
The warrant?
[BURLEIGH *hurries to door, C. As he opens it a clamour is heard in the outer corridor*]
Nay, what uproar's this?

BURLEIGH [*Re-enters, speaks rapidly*]
My Liege,
A panic spreads through London. It is rumoured
That murderers commissioned here from Rome
Attack your throne; that they have forced the Palace
And swear to free the Stuart, set her in
Your place. Your Majesty, delay no longer!
This day must surely be her last!
[*Enter,* DAVISON, *with warrant. Behind him* TALBOT, *troubled.*

ELIZABETH The warrant—
Oh, God—

BURLEIGH You hear your people clamouring? Sign it!

TALBOT Your Majesty, do not be hasty!

ELIZABETH Talbot!
The people ask it— I'm so weary—weary

Of this most frightful strife! If one of us
Two Queens must perish to make safe the other
Why should it not be I who yields? My people
Shall make decision. I have governed them
These many years successfully; but, then,
Naught has been needed but to make them happy.
Now comes my first momentous regal duty.
It makes me feel how weak a woman I am!

BURLEIGH I should betray my office, and my country,
Were I, your Majesty, to stand here, silent.
This is no hour for mercy! To promote
Your people's welfare is your highest duty.
What! Will you leave the kingdom longer to
The storm of civil strife? Religious discord?

ELIZABETH I'll draw no counsel from mere human sources!
I must spread out my doubts before the Judge
Of all. I'll act on His revealings only.
Withdraw, my Lords—

[*To* DAVISON, *as Lords, bowing, exit up C.*]

You, Sir, wait there, apart.

[*Gazes long at warrant*]

Have I not practised justice all my life?
Shunned mere despotic deeds? Have I done so
Only to stay my hands at this, the first
But necessary act of violence?
It is in self-defence! It is an act
That must be to defend my life, and throne!
All Europe's powers are allied to destroy me.
Spain, even now, prepares a fierce sea war
That shall exterminate our people! Well—
They know who 'tis who stirs the world against us,
For whose sake I am excommunicated—

[*A silence*]

No—Mary Stuart is a threatening fiend
Who's ever there before me! Yes, her head
Must fall. I will have peace in England! She
Has been the bane of my existence. Every
Fair hope I've planted has been blighted by
This viper. Not until she is no more
Can I be free!

[*Crosses C., deep in thought*]

How she looked down on me!
It was as if her eye would blast me. Ah,
The wretch! I am a bastard, am I?

[*Stabs at paper savagely, signing the warrant. Beckons to* DAVISON, *who comes forward, receives it on his knee; then, dismissed, he backs, bowing, to door C.*]

And, Davison, do you give orders that
A velvet suit be made to fit the headsman.
I would the deed were done in royal manner—

[*Reacts, sinks into chair.*

CURTAIN

EPISODE EIGHT

SCENE:—*As in Episode Four, save that wide doors, up C., are open. Black velvet curtains cut off view of hall.*

DISCOVERED:—KENNEDY, *in black, at cabinet, upon which are packages that she is sorting and addressing, while stopping, now and then, to apply handkerchief to eyes. Enter, a moment after,*

AT RISE:—PAWLET, *in black, also. He carries a jewel box, which he lays before* KENNEDY, *with some slips of paper.*

PAWLET
This, Mistress, is the inventory. You
Will see it mentions everything the Queen
Brought with her.

[*He exits. Enter,* MELVIL. *She turns, rises, meets him with little spasmodic cry.*

KENNEDY
Melvil! Is it really you?

MELVIL
Yes, Kennedy. And so, we meet again—
But, 'tis a bitter meeting! Well, I've come
To bid the Queen farewell, a last farewell!

KENNEDY
Oh, would I never had been born to see
This day, Sir Melvil!

MELVIL
There!—there! Say no more!
We will undo each other with our grief!
But on this last sad day we must be firm.
Come! pledge your word to moderate your tears;
For, when the rest, giv'n over to despair
Wail round her Majesty, 'tis we must give
Support to her to meet what comes!

KENNEDY Ah, Melvil,
You're mistaken if you think the Queen
Has need of our support to meet her death
With firmness. It is she, my friend, who will
Exhibit courage, an undaunted heart!

MELVIL Where is she now? May I not go to her?

KENNEDY She passed the night in prayer and writing, Sir,
Saying farewell, in this way, to her friends;
And then she wrote her Will with her own hand;
But now she's resting, Sir, a moment.

MELVIL Who
Is with her?

KENNEDY None, Sir, but the women, who
Have been allowed to come back to her, and
The doctor, Burgoyne.

[*Enter, weeping,* ELSPETH CURLE]

Mistress Curle—well? Is
The Queen awake?

ELSPETH She is already dressed
And asking for you, madame.

[KENNEDY *hurries to door.* MELVIL *would follow, but she stops him.*

KENNEDY Wait, Sir Melvil,
Until her Majesty has been prepared
To see you.

ELSPETH [*To* MELVIL]
Are you really, Sir, the Queen's
Old friend? Then, Sir, you come from London?

MELVIL Yes.

ELSPETH Sir, what is said there of my husband? He
Is Curle, the Secretary.

MELVIL Ah, indeed?
He will be set at liberty, as soon—

ELSPETH As soon as she whom he traduced is dead!
Oh, Sir, he is our Lady's murderer!
All say it was his testimony that
Condemned her.

MELVIL That is true!

ELSPETH Then curses on him!
What he has testified was false! False! false!
It was—

MELVIL Nay, Mistress, careful what you say here.

ELSPETH I care not, Sir, for Care! I will maintain it
Before the Court! The Queen dies innocent.

MELVIL God grant it's true, Mistress.

[KENNEDY *re-enters hurriedly. Speaks to* ELSPETH.

KENNEDY Will you require
A cup of wine for her?

[ELSPETH *exits hurriedly, C., between the black curtains.*

MELVIL Is the Queen ill?

KENNEDY Sir, she believes she's strong. She will not eat;
But, with the painful ordeal that's before her,
Her enemies shall not enjoy the triumph
Of saying fear has blanched her cheek when 'tis
But weariness.

MELVIL May I go, now, and see her?

KENNEDY Sir, she is coming here.

[*Enter* BURGOYNE, *with two weeping women. All in deep mourning.*

BURGOYNE Ah, Melvil! Melvil!—

[*Sees* MELVIL. *Forward to him.*
They embrace.
Re-enter, in terror, ELSPETH, *with gold goblet which she sets on table.*

ELSPETH Oh, God!—

BURGOYNE [*Supporting her*]
What is it, Mistress?

ELSPETH Sir, the hall
Is draped with black; and as I passed, I saw
A dreadful scaffold, and a gleaming axe
Laid on it. Throngs of people crowding round it
Who, with a horrid curiosity,
And thirst for blood, are waiting for the victim!
[MARY *enters, slowly.*

MELVIL [*To* ELSPETH]
Control yourself before her Majesty—

MARY [*Looking over the circle about her*]
Why are you weeping? You, instead, should all
Be glad with me that my long pilgrimage
Of woe is nearly over; that my prison
At last flies open; that henceforth, for all
Eternity, I shall be free. Ah, Melvil—
[*Gives him her hand. He, shaking with sobs, kisses it*]
In time to see her whom you served, triumph!
Your coming comforts me; for now I know
My name will not be giv'n o'er utterly
To foes. One friend, of my own faith, will be
Beside me, as a witness, when I die.
Ah, Melvil, fears for you have oft depressed
Me. Tell me, how have you, of late, fared here
In this most hostile land for you, for me?

MELVIL Nothing has galled me, save my grief for you,
That I have been so powerless to serve you!

MARY Ah, that I might have pressed, at least once ere
My going, here, upon my breast, one in
Whose veins the blood of Stuart ran! But I

Must suffer in a foreign land, with none
Of my own kindred by me to bewail
My fate. Melvil, take these, my latest wishes—
My blessing to my Royal brother, King
Of France, and to the Royal family.
I bless the Cardinal, my honoured kinsman.
As well, dear Henry Guise, my cousin, both
Remembered in my Will. I trust they'll not
Despise the simple gifts made by a heart
That loves them.

[*To the women about*]

You, I have commended to
The King of France. He will protect you, and
Give you another and a better country,
A better home to all. If my last wishes
Have weight with you, stay not in England. Nor
Let any glut his pride with sight of your
Calamities. Swear, by this image of
Our suffering Lord, that when I am no more
You'll leave this fatal land!

MELVIL [*Kisses cross fervently*]

I swear it, on
Behalf of all.

MARY Though I am poor, and plundered,
That which I still possess I am allowed
To make disposal of. It shall be shared
Among you; for I hope, at least in this,
My Will will be respected. Though, 'tis said,
The headsman takes as perquisite whate'er
His victim, dying, wears, what I wear, on
My way to death, I would have yours.

[*Looks at her jewels*]

The pomp

Of earth, e'en on the road to Heav'n! You, Alice,
You, Rosamund, and Gertrude,
[*Gives hand to each as she speaks*]
you are young,
And ornament may still delight your heart.
I leave my pearls to you, my clothing. Elspeth,
To you I should be generous; for I leave you
The most unhappy woman of them all.
I hope my legacy will prove to you,
Though it is but two thousand francs, alas,
That I have not remembered against you
Your husband's treachery.
[*Bends, kisses* ELSPETH'S *forehead*]
You, dearest Jane,
Set but small store on precious stones, or gold.
The dearest jewel I can leave to you
Will be your faithful memory of me!
But, take this handkerchief, dear Jane. I worked
It for you in my hours of anguish. My
Hot scalding tears are there within its texture.
And I would ask a last sad service from you—
That when the time is come for't, you will bind
My eyes with it. I would not have that service
From any but my faithful Kennedy.

KENNEDY [*To* MELVIL, *as she turns away*]
Oh, Sir! I cannot bear it!

MARY Come, now, all
Of you, and take my last farewell.
[*One after another, as named, falls on knees, and kisses her hand*]
Good-bye!
You, Alice, Elspeth, Gertrude, Jane, and you,
Burgoyne, I thank you for your faithful service.

Your lips are hot, my Gertrude. I have been
Much hated in my lifetime; yet, as well,
I've been much loved. There, there, no more! Farewell!
Farewell, my friends—Farewell, forevermore!
[*Turns away suddenly; dries eyes; speaks*]
Melvil, my temporal affairs I have
Arranged. I leave the world in debt to none.

MELVIL And have you strength, Madame, to overcome
All thought of bitterness, and hatred, now?

MARY I do not fear relapse. I have surrendered
My loves and hatreds to my God!

MELVIL Then, Madame,
Prepare for one last trial which is in store
For you. Lord Leicester and Lord Burleigh would
Have a last word with you.

[*Enter* BURLEIGH, *who comes forward, and* LEICESTER, *who hangs back, as far in shadow as possible.*

BURLEIGH My Lady Stuart,
We've come to get from you your last desires.
It is the pleasure of our Royal Mistress
That nothing be denied you that is reasonable.

MARY If I might see a priest of my own faith—

[BURLEIGH *negatives this promptly*]

Then, Sir, my Will declares my last desires;
That I have given into Pawlet's hands.
My humble wish is that it be fulfilled.

BURLEIGH You may rely on it. What more?

MARY Say to
Elizabeth—a sister Queen sends greeting.
Say: From the bottom of my heart, I freely
Forgive her for my death.

[*To* PAWLET, *who is in the background, having entered with* BURLEIGH *and* LEICESTER]

You, Sir,
I have unwittingly caused you much sorrow.
Through me you've lost a nephew who was stay
To you, who are in years. I pray you, let
Me hope you will not hate me for it.

[*The curtains part up C. Enter, a group of armed men, who take position. The Catholics present all cross themselves. Enter, the* SHERIFF, *carrying a white staff.*

PAWLET [*Replying to* MARY]

God
Go with you, Madame! Go in peace!

MARY [*Turns, sees the* SHERIFF. *A spasmodic shudder, and quick control. To* KENNEDY]

Come, Jane,
What ails you? Now my hour is here, and we
Must say adieu.

[*To* MELVIL, *who comes to her, R.*]

You, Melvil, Kennedy,
Attend me to the last. I've nothing now
To wish for in this world!

[MELVIL *holds a crucifix before her. She kisses it, clasping it in both hands, raised to Heaven*]

My God, and Father!
Into Thy hands—

[*Turns up Scene.* LEICESTER, *staring, horrified, meets her gaze. She falters, momentarily. Would speak, but looks, instead, at crucifix, passes up, and out, the* SHERIFF *following, her women sobbing.*

THE END

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